On May 29, 1735, Johan Hendricus Goetschi, seventeen years old, arrived in Philadelphia with his parents and siblings. His father, a Reformed minister back in Switzerland, had come to the New World to escape the scandal he occasioned by having impregnated a young parishioner at his church in Saletz. Heading to the New World by way of Rotterdam, the elder Goetschi had managed to secure a commission as a missionary in Pennsylvania, but after an exceedingly stormy voyage, compounded by poor food and a martinet ship captain, he fell ill and then died the day after the ship moored in Philadelphia.\(^1\)

With his father's death, the teenaged John Henry Goetschius (he eventually Latinized his name) had to shoulder responsibility for his mother and seven younger siblings. Having studied theology briefly in Zurich, Goetschius, ever resourceful, began preaching to German Reformed settlers in area churches. He thereby began a long and colorful career in the Middle colonies. Writing to a friend in Zurich on July 21, 1735, less than two months after his arrival in the New World, Goetschius reported that he preached twice every Sunday and that he looked forward to being ordained by the “English Presbyterians” the following Christmas “in order that I may be able to administer the communion, unite people in marriage and baptize children.”\(^2\) When he appeared before the Presbytery of Philadelphia to apply for orders in 1737, however, the Presbytery found him “altogether ignorant in College Learning, and but poorly read in


\(^2\) Quoted in Hinke, *Ministers of the German Reformed Congregations*, 308.
Divinity.” They concluded, therefore, that “his ordination to the Ministry must at present be deferred.” The lack of clerical credentials did not deter young Goetschius, for he continued his itinerancy along the Delaware and preached the next year in places as far afield as Amwell, New Jersey, the Upper Hudson Valley, and Long Island.3

Soon, however, Goetschius’s itinerancy began to attract opposition from the settled clergy, who resented his intrusions. Johann Philips Boehm, a German Reformed minister near Philadelphia, quarreled bitterly with Goetschius over control of Boehm’s congregations. The Dutch also were affected by Goetschius’s peregrinations. “His conduct has been improper in each place,” the Classis of Amsterdam learned from various Dutch Reformed clergy in New York and New Jersey. “At present he is stopping at Fishkill, above New York, where he has been allowed to preach on his promise to abstain from strong drink.”4

Goetschius’s appeal lay in his charismatic demeanor, his preaching skills, and his pietistic theology. In Reformed circles on both sides of the Atlantic, a rift had developed between the urban, orthodox traditionalists on the one hand, whose theology, according to their critics, had grown scholastic, and pietists like Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen on the other hand, who called their auditors to a life of godliness and spiritual fervor.5

In October 1740, amidst the turmoil of the Great Awakening, Goetschius scored his biggest success when the revivalistically inclined Dutch congregants from Newtown, Jamaica, Hempstead, and Oyster Bay, on Long Island—those who admired his “preaching gifts”—called him as their minister, offering an annual salary of £100 (less £7 for firewood), an assurance of a respectable house, an apple orchard, garden, and pasture enough for two horses and two cows.6 Although

he still lacked formal ordination, Goetschius had studied theology for a year in the "kitchen seminary" run by Peter Henry Dorsius, a Reformed minister in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Despite the Classis of Amsterdam's repeated insistence that Dorsius and his academy lacked ecclesiastical standing—much less any authority to certify ministers—Dorsius, Frelinghuysen, and Gilbert Tennent ordained Goetschius as a minister in the Dutch Reformed church on April 7, 1741, with Frelinghuysen delivering the ordination sermon. Bernardus Freeman, whose placement as a minister on Long Island just after the turn of the century had occasioned bitter disputes among the Dutch, installed Goetschius at Jamaica, on Long Island, twelve days later.

Goetschius's presence in Queens County provoked bitter feuds between the pietist faction which supported him (members of the Coetus party who sought ecclesiastical independence from the Netherlands) and his traditionalist opposition, organized in the Middle colonies as the Conferentie party. Once installed in various churches on Long Island, Goetschius quickly dismissed the consistories that had opposed him and appointed more congenial churchmen to ecclesiastical offices, a maneuver that had become quite common among Dutch pietist ministers. Goetschius further offended the antirevivalists in his charge by preaching a sermon on August 22, 1742, entitled "The Unknown God," a rebuke to those lacking in exper-

9 Freeman had consolidated his power in the Long Island churches four decades earlier by using the same tactics, and Frelinghuysen "purged" his consistories in New Jersey of those who evinced scant enthusiasm for his pietistic teachings.
iential—or, in the argot of the Great Awakening, experimental—piety, who, according to its author, could not claim knowledge of God. Goetschius reviled the mere practice of religion, which he contrasted with true spirituality, and he warned his ecclesiastical opponents that “you will experience your religion in hell, and not in heaven, as you had hoped.”

Among Dutch traditionalists, Goetschius evoked the same visceral reaction that Frelinghuysen had encountered in New Jersey. His sermon on “The Unknown God,” which implied that the enemies of the Awakening were pagan, provoked outrage. “Shall this young stripling,” some of the offended congregants asked, “come and tell us that we have so long served an unknown God?” His enemies pressed for an investigation, and the Classis of Amsterdam, miffed about the Goetschius case in particular and about the colonial revival in general, appointed a committee of New York ministers to investigate the young pietist. The commission, headed by Dominie Gualtherus Du Bois of New York City, met several times at the Brooklyn ferry to consider the evidence against Goetschius and finally preferred formal charges on April 25, 1743. They asked Goetschius to answer for his irregular ordination and for allowing unlicensed itinerants to preach to his congregations, a common practice among New Lights. Furthermore, according to the committee’s findings, Goetschius had insisted that those who come to Holy Communion “must first be assured of their regeneration and salvation” and that “no one can pray ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ except the truly regenerated.” Finally, “Rev. Goetschius had proclaimed publicly from the pulpit, and before the congregation, that a believer ought to know the time and hour and place of his regeneration.” The committee’s investigations also raised doubts about Goetschius’s probity. Du Bois and his colleagues heard testimony that the young minister had made several untoward advances to Isaac Onderdonk’s wife, Anitje, and his enemies on Long

10 An English translation of this sermon follows.
11 Quoted in Adrian C. Leiby, The United Churches of Hackensack and Schraalenburgh, New Jersey, 1688-1822 (River Edge, 1976), 79. Chapter 5 of the volume is a long, albeit hagiographical, treatment of Goetschius.
Island insisted that "Mr. Goetschius continues in and increases in perversities."\(^{12}\)

When Goetschius refused to answer the charges—he declared at one point that any who opposed him "were plainly godless people"—the commission referred the case to Amsterdam and proscribed Goetschius from administering the sacraments until the Netherlands ecclesiastical authorities ruled on the validity of his ordination. Goetschius ignored the committee's request, and when the Classis of Amsterdam determined his ordination invalid, he disregarded this too and remarked that if it were not for the Classis "this country had long ago been filled with pious ministers."\(^{13}\)

In 1748 the Classis, attempting to defuse the situation, asked that Goetschius submit to an ordination examination and recommended that he seek a call from any church other than those on Long Island, because of the bitterness and partisanship that had surrounded his tenure there. Goetschius reluctantly accepted an appointment as an associate at the Hackensack church in New Jersey, but controversy followed him there, as Goetschius’s pietism quickly clashed with the more traditionalist spirituality of Dominie Antonius Curtenius, his senior colleague. In Hackensack, Goetschius established conventicles and, according to Heinrich Melchior Mühltenberg, "advised those who had been awakened to meet by themselves every week and engage in exercises of piety." Goetschius also continued his itinerancy while in New Jersey. In nearby Paramus, Dominie Benjamin Vanderlinde complained that Goetschius visited his Dutch congregation there almost weekly "in order to discover whether some people could not be inveigled into opposition to their own minister. Such people, then, he would attach unto himself, indeed, whole families of our congregation sometimes, who had been supporters of the church at Paramus. Then in houses and barns, he preached to them, and even administered the Sacraments."\(^{14}\) Despite opposition from the clerical

\(^{12}\) Eccl. Recs. N.Y., 4:2787-88, 2829, 2889-91, 2841. The testimony regarding Anitje Onderdonk was disputed.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 4:2896, 2881.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 4:2944-46; 5:3622. Curtenius, according to Mühltenberg, "complained of his colleague, who, he said, was too impetuous and hasty and too ready to begin all sorts of innovations": Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein, eds. and trans., The Journals of Henry Melchior Mühltenberg (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1942-1953), 1:298.
opponents of the Awakening, Goetschius enjoyed considerable popular support in New Jersey, and in his later years he set about to ensure the future of evangelical religion within the Dutch Reformed church through his activities on behalf of the Coetus and his participation in the founding of Queen’s College.

Controversy surrounded Goetschius throughout his career in the Middle colonies, and the factionalism he engendered sharpened the divisions between revivalist and non-revivalist factions during the Great Awakening. Preaching styles reflected the divergent approaches and emphases of evangelicals and non-evangelicals. His opponents on Long Island testified that Goetschius “boasted that every sermon of his did not cost him more than an hour’s study, as can be proved by those who heard him,” while Johannes Arondeus, his clerical rival on Long Island, wrote out his sermons in full before reading them to his congregations. But the pietists preferred Goetschius’s extemporaneity to the jejune sermons of the orthodox, and such disagreements occasioned ecclesiastical schisms among the Dutch. “I soon found to my great sorrow that an extensive dispute and division had arisen in the Dutch Reformed churches here,” a newcomer from the Netherlands commented upon his arrival in 1744. “It does not exist so much in the city, where, since my stay, everything has gone on in a fairly quiet way; but it rages principally in the country districts, and especially on Long Island.” At the center of the storm stood Goetschius, who had earned the enmity of his adversaries when he “endeavored to convert them.”¹⁵ Frelinghuysen rallied to his defense. When Goetschius published The Unknown God in 1743, Frelinghuysen contributed an introduction which defended both the validity of Goetschius’s ordination and his orthodoxy. Frelinghuysen vouched for Goetschius’s “ernest diligence and faithfulness” and compared his own relationship to his younger colleague with that of Paul, the apostle, to Timothy in the New Testament.

After Frelinghuysen’s recurrent mental debilities in the 1740s and his death in 1747, Goetschius became, in effect, the leader of the Awakening among the Dutch. But Goetschius’s reputation as a prominent New Light extended beyond Dutch circles. Contemporaries

regarded him as “a follower of Whitefield,” and, indeed, “he went preaching to his adherents in barns or in open fields.” At Hackensack in 1751, Mühlenberg found “a small group of awakened souls among the Reformed,” and he identified Goetschius as “the intermediary through whom these awakenings take place.” In 1740 Gilbert Tennent, one of the three ministers officiating at Goetschius’s ordination, had published a tract called *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry*, which lamented the sinful condition of the colonial clergy. Goetschius echoed this view with the charge that “most of the ministers in this country were unregenerate ministers,” that some of the Dutch clergy “had already preached many people into hell,” and that “unconverted preachers could not be of any use with all their sermons.” Like Frelinghuysen and other New Lights, Goetschius insisted that “an inward call through God’s Spirit” was “superior to all external ordinations.”

Goetschius shared with other revivalists a disregard for denominational boundaries, a fondness for “experimental” religion, a suspicion of high-church authority and traditions, and a disposition to take ecclesiastical matters into his own hands. In his introduction to *The Unknown God*, he declared that God had placed him “as a watchman on Zion’s towers and walls to give clear warning to sinners,” among whom he counted those “who are baptized and take Holy Communion, who lead a particularly religious and moral life and therefore deserve a good name and praise.” His ecclesiastical opponents resented Goetschius’s insinuations about their lack of spirituality. “He called himself and his adherents the truly regenerated ones, or God’s people,” one minister reported, “the others were the family of Cain, men of the world, and children of Belial, those who had been rejected.” Like other Dutch pietists before him, Goetschius abhorred religious formality and delivered himself of the view that “the reading of a sermon on Sunday, when there was no preacher was wicked.”

---

16 Ibid., 4 2837, 2841, 2891, 2898, Tappert and Doberstein, eds., *Journals of Muhlenberg*, 1 298 Goetschius’s condemnation of the Dutch clergy was directed toward Vincentius Antonides and Bernardus Freeman, however, Goetschius at other points declared his admiration for Freeman see, for example, *Eccl Recs N Y*, 4 2885 Tennent’s sermon was preached originally at Nottingham, Pennsylvania, March 8, 1740 Gilbert Tennent, *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry* (Philadelphia, 1740)

17 *Eccl Recs N Y*, 4 2840
At one point, Goetschius stood “before the church door at Oyster Bay” and, in his stentorian voice, read a “well-known lampoon” discrediting one of his Dutch colleagues. At Newtown he authorized his partisans to break into the church, thereby allowing Frelinghuysen to preach and Goetschius to install his own consistory, as he had done earlier at Jamaica. During a later dispute in New Jersey, Goetschius stormed into a church meeting and cried out to a clerical opponent: “God has condemned you to the lowest hell, and Christ has spewed you out of his mouth.”

John Henry Goetschius, then, though lesser known to historians than Frelinghuysen or Tennent, was a pivotal figure in the Middle colonies during the eighteenth century. At a time when more and more Dutch congregants became enamored of pietism and revivalism, Goetschius railed against the formal, dead orthodoxy that characterized the opponents of the Awakening. A man who himself had learned theology under Peter Henry Dorsius, Goetschius, in turn, advertised his tutorial services in a New York newspaper, and at least fourteen ministers of the Dutch Reformed church learned evangelical theology and piety from him before his death in 1774.

Goetschius’s only published sermon, The Unknown God, appears here for the first time in an unabridged English translation. It is one of the very few examples of colonial Dutch homiletic literature, and, aside from several of Frelinghuysen’s sermons, the only extant Dutch pietistic sermon published during the Great Awakening. Delivered before the Dutch congregation at Newtown on August 22, 1742, the

---


20 On other eighteenth-century Dutch publications, see Hendrik Edelman, Dutch-American Bibliography, 1693-1794: A Descriptive Catalog of Dutch-language Books, Pamphlets and Almanacs Printed in America (Nieuwkoop, 1974); regarding Goetschius’s sermon, see p. 34. There are several Dutch catechisms and broadsides published in the eighteenth century, but very few Dutch sermons.
sustained, careful argumentation belies the charge that Goetschius spent little time preparing his sermons.21 The extensive use of proof-texts, moreover, indicates his broad familiarity with the scriptures. Goetschius's call for self-examination ("look into a mirror that does not flatter") was a common rhetorical device among Dutch pietists—witness Frelinghuysen's sermon "A Mirrour that Flattereth not" and Bernardus Freeman's "Mirror of Self-Knowledge."22 The organization of the sermon—its textual exegesis, improvement, and application—resembles the plain-style preaching that characterized the sermons of New England Puritans, although it is more likely that Goetschius modeled his preaching after that of other pietists, notably Frelinghuysen, a preaching style that Goetschius would have learned under the tutelage of Dorsius.23

Indeed, Goetschius's pietistic biases emerge rather forcefully in this document, which illustrates both his pugnacious style and his scintillating rhetoric. Goetschius's choice of a text makes an implicit comparison between the Athenian idolators of Acts (chapter seventeen) and those who oppose the true "experimental" religion of the Great Awakening. Once he reaches the application section, Goetschius draws the parallel explicitly, excoriating the "foolish and erring sinners" among his congregations, who "feel nothing and so have never known or worshipped God in truth or in spirit." How awful it must

21 The sermon also may have been preached earlier (July 23, 1742) at one of Goetschius's other churches; see Corwin, Manual, s.v. "Goetschius."

22 Frelinghuysen's sermon appears as Appendix 1 in James Tanis, Dutch Calvinistic Pietism in the Middle Colonies: A Study in the Life and Theology of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (The Hague, 1967), 165-76; a translation or Freeman's treatise is at the New-York Historical Society. On the pietistic device of self-examination, see Carl J. Schindler, "The Psychology of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg's Pastoral Technique," Lutheran Church Quarterly 16 (1943), 54-55.

23 For Frelinghuysen's sermons, see Frelinghuysen, Sermons; Tanis, Dutch Calvinistic Pietism, 165-76. On the Puritan plain-style sermon, see Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England (Chapel Hill, 1982), 118-19; and Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (New York, 1939), chapter 12. The similarities in style between Puritan and pietist sermons may be more than coincidental. The Puritan plain style was an explicit rejection of the metaphysical sermons of such Anglican worthies as John Donne and Lancelot Andrewes; the pietist sermon, born in the informal pietistic conventicles of northern Europe, was a protest against the learned sermons of the urban elite. Both traditions, moreover, drew from the thought of Peter Ramus.
be, Goetschius intoned, referring to these “fake Christians,” to be “a slave of damnation, a henchman of the eternal enemy.”

Just as Frelinghuysen had done so often, Goetschius bemoaned the absence of true piety among churchgoers. “How objectionable it is when one thinks to please his Creator with superficial and habitual lip-service,” Goetschius said, “in a graceless and spiritless way, without any spiritual experiencing.” Goetschius saw around him various outward or “superficial” expressions of piety—“going to church, taking communion, praying, bowing, singing”—but precious little true piety. All this he regarded as hypocrisy, and hypocrites, he believed, those who cling to a “dead and routine belief in an unknown God,” could expect God’s judgment, despite their outward spirituality. Having no more than “word-knowledge” of God, he warned, “makes hell hotter and the last judgment more severe.”

Such invective, especially in the volatile ecclesiastical climate on Long Island at the time, did not go unnoticed. In his introduction, Frelinghuysen implied that Goetschius and his sermon had indeed met with opposition and that its publication would allow readers to render their own judgments concerning Goetschius’s orthodoxy. The preacher himself acknowledged the controversial nature of the sermon when he wrote that “many have found uncommon fault with it.” Goetschius, however, remained unrepentant, placing himself in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, particularly Jeremiah, who called their people to task for idolatry even though in doing so they faced rebuke and ostracism.

This translation from the Dutch, prepared for the author by Liesbeth Fontijn, is taken from the Evans microfilm copy of the 1743 original, published in New York by John Peter Zenger. A very loose and abridged English translation of the sermon appeared in successive numbers of The Banner of Truth (volume 2, December 1867 and January 1868), a publication of the True Reformed Dutch church. In places where the microfilm copy was unintelligible, the translator consulted an 1871 reprint edition, also in Dutch, in the collection of the Brooklyn Historical Society.24 Spellings, outline headings, and

---

24 Johannes H. Goetschius, God Onbekend aan Velen, Die Hem Dienen, Leerrede over Hand. 17:23, door Johannes H. Goetschius, in leven Predikant, te Jamaica, Long Island, Staat New
punctuation have been standardized, and biblical references, often inaccurate in the original text, have been corrected whenever possible by means of the “errata” page in the 1743 edition, the 1871 reprint, or a modern concordance. Editorial emendations or additions are set in brackets.

THE
UNKNOWN GOD,
or
A short and simple message about how many, who are said to live a dutiful and devout life, honor and serve a God they neither know nor love.
Shown in a faithful interpretation and application of The Acts, xvii, 23: “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you.”
Preached on 22 Aug. 1742, in the church of Newtown, on Long Island.

By
Joh. Hend. Goetschius, Preacher at that town.
New York, printed by J. P. Zenger,
MDCCXLIII.

Published according to Paul’s command,
2 Tim. iv, 2, 3, 4, 5.
“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they

---

York, Uitgesproken den 22sten Augustus 1742 (Holland, 1871). The Evans microfilm copy of the 1743 edition purports to come from an original at the Long Island Historical Society (now the Brooklyn Historical Society); the Brooklyn Historical Society, however, now claims to have only the 1871 reprint. In two places in the original edition, on the bottom of p. 38 and the top of p. 39, where the original was illegible, I consulted the Banner of Truth translation.
shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

To the Reader be Salvation and Blessedness.
God seeking souls, to whom the promise has been fulfilled, they all shall know the Lord.

This sermon from The Acts xvii, 23, written and spoken by the right reverend and very learned Mr. Joh. Hend. Goetschius, shepherd at Jamaica, Long Island, was read with satisfaction, and not having found anything in it that could be in conflict with the accepted teachings of the Reformed Low-Dutch Church, nor with the formulae of unity; but, on the contrary, having found that the interpretation is well thought-out according to the original languages, agreeing with the aim of the Spirit, and the application discerned, soul-stirring and most serious, we do not hesitate to recommend it to the use of the devout Christian; “test all things,” following the faithful of Berea, who were more noble than those in Thessalonica, searching the scriptures daily, we rejoice in the earnest diligence and faithfulness as well as the well-grounded and solid knowledge of this our young brother, the more so as we got to know him well, for he stayed in our house many times, and we came to love him as a son. He is like a young Timothy and much revered as a brother, while we also know that his ministry is blessed and that he seeks the approval of God, presenting himself as a laboror who is not ashamed to divide the word rightly, giving everyone his proper part; thus it does not surprise us that he meets with opposition and objection, so that he had to say several times: “To me a great door has opened and there are many adversaries:” to such an extent that his enemies have already closed one church to him (the normal way for those to act who are driven by the spirit of the Anti-Christ) but he can as well preach in barns or under the open sky as in the church, just like several of his brothers in this land have done before him. He is also branded as an enthusiast, an old worn-out form of slander against those faithful teachers who stress inward Christianity, the necessity of rebirth of water and spirit, and godly life and conversation in and through the Spirit. But what strengthens the hands of the evildoers most, is that there has been a meeting of preachers and their church councils about the lawfulness of his graduation and other grievances against him, in which it was
decided that these gentlemen could not find that his ordination was lawful, etc. But it does not matter what these gentlemen could or could not find. But this is neither the time nor the place. On the other hand, I am ready and willing to prove not only his orthodoxy, but also the lawfulness of his ordination, but as Dominie Dorsius is man enough himself, we will leave that up to him. It seems strange, however, that as long as Father Freeman lived, Dominie Goetschius was lawful, for not only has this reverend gentleman signed his call, but he also introduced Dominie Goetschius in the church at Jamaica with the words: “I am with you, beloved, all days until the end of the world.” Shortly after his death, men disturbed the congregation. In the meantime our fellow-sufferer can console himself with God’s words: “All that has been prepared against you will not succeed.” May the Lord give his further blessings and splendor over his service and teaching of languages and theology to devout and gifted young men, in order to prepare them like young Nazareans for the preaching ministry.

This is the wish of, 
T. J. Frielinghuysen

New-Jersey, 
12 Jan. 1743.

The poor distracted Christendom
Serves God and knows not why,
As though to serve itself,
It looks for the Savior, but does
Not find him, because it loves nothing
But freedom of judgment;
But the Lamb came most of all
To heal the wounds of
The sins, of its spirit,
By denial.

Lodensteens Uitspaningen

Dearly Beloved Reader;
We wish you great BLESSEDNESS and welfare of SOUL and body.
It has not been long since the King of Kings has put me as a watchman on Zion’s towers and walls to give clear warning to sinners; but I find it so distressing to have to call out, “Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor have men lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me,” Jer. xv, 10.

And therefore, as I cannot follow the advice of those “which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits; Get out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us,” Isa. xxx, 10, 11. Because I like to be careful not to be counted among the kind of prophets that God speaks of, “Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment,” Lam. ii, 14. “They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people lightly, saying Peace, peace; where there is no peace.” Jer. vi, 14.

When, as a watchman has to do sometimes, I look around me, I have to shout, “My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war,” Jer. iv, 19.

“That thou mayest know and try their way. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are brass and iron: they are all corrupters,” Jer. vi, 27. “I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saying, ‘What have I done?’ Every one turneth to his own course, as the horse rusheth into the battle,” Jer. viii, 6. “Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it,” Isa. xxi, 3.

When I say: “Behold I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you, return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and doings good, and they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart,” Jer. xviii, 11, 12. So I then continue and say, “I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity. Then they said, ‘Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor
counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words,' " etc., Jer. xviii, 17-23.

Then I "stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word," hoping that "they will hearken and turn every man from his evil way and then saying to this man that he is worthy to die, for he hath prophesied against this house," Jer. xxvi, 1-4.

Therefore, the princes said to the king, "We beseech thee, let this man be put to death; for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt," Jer. xxxviii, 4.

When I look at the universal church, I hear the complaint: Ah, Lord God! Surely thou hast greatly deceived this people, saying, "You shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul," Jer. iv, 10.

"Mine heart within me is broken, because of the prophets; all my bones shake," Jer. xxiii, 9.

When I look upon the little flock of Jesus's sheep that knows his voice and that of his messengers, and that is known themselves, one is reminded of Jer. xxx, 17. "This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after," Jer. xxx, 17. "Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out on their mothers' bosom," Lam. ii, 11-12.

O, that all those who sigh can and may "lift up a prayer for the remnant that is left," Isa. xxxvii, 4, and with us call out, "O, the hope of Israel, the Savior, thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not," Jer. xiv, 8, 9.

Read this simple work over with an impartial spirit and give an honest judgment; for many have found uncommon fault with it. But
we wish that the Lord may forgive them and instead enlighten their eyes, so they may from now on experientially know and serve their Creator, lest he shall “tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver,” Ps. 1, 22.

With wishes for the well-being of your soul, I remain, at your service,

Joh. Hendricus Goetschius, servant of the crucified Lord Jesus.

28 Dec.
1742.

GOD UNKNOWN

To many who serve him,
The Acts, xvii, 23

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD; whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Esteemed and beloved Listeners;
It is our only wish that, by the light and the power of God’s Spirit, we may explain this remarkable text, well-suited to the circumstances of our time, as clearly and understandably as possible, and to impress it on the hearts and consciences of those who are still outside an experimental knowledge and worship, so that it may wake up, console, and rejoice the true knowers and worshippers of God, to the honor of God’s name and the edification of you all.

AMEN.

What would inspire a soul, wishing to be saved, to really get to know his Creator, more than the invaluable usefulness of having, and the irreparable harm of lacking, knowledge?

i. It is useful if one is to know the Creator well, for in that (1) “is the greatest delight,” Ps. i, 2; cxix, 16, 24, 25; Rom. vii, 22; (2) it is the only way to life eternal, John xvii, 3; Jer. ix, 24; (3) God only wants to be one with those who know him.

ii. It is harmful not to know God, for (1) “God hates and threatens those,” 2 Thess. i, 8; Rom. i, 21, (2) for it alienates from him, Eph.
iv, 18; (3) they are open to many sins and to cunning seductions by Satan, 1 Thess. iv, 5; (4) they cannot serve God, nor thank him, nor glorify him, Rom. i, 21.

But every person who wants to be saved must know that he cannot rest in a reasonable and literal knowledge of the things that God has revealed in his word, for not having more than word-knowledge makes hell hotter and the last judgment more severe, Luke xii, 47, 48, but to penetrate the word to the marrow and the pit, not just to “pierce with the hearing of your ears, but also to see with the eye,” Job lxii, 5, 6, “to pierce twice what God has said.” For without such true and experienced knowledge God is still unknown and all religion is idle. This is what Paul tries to teach the Athenians in our text, in connection with what was mentioned before.

Paul, after he fled from persecution from Thessalonica to Berea, teaches the gospel there and, being persecuted again, comes to Athens, [Acts xvii] verses 11-15, where he speaks against the idolatry of the people and tries to make the true God and religion known to them, because of which they mock him as a proclaimer of strange Gods and took him to Areopagus, [Acts xvii] verses 16-21, where he addressed the people as follows: “For as I passed through your city and beheld your devotions,” etc. We find two main parts in this text.

I. The occasion this disciple of God chooses to bring his message.
II. The message he brings.

I. The occasion on which the Apostle brings his heavenly message of King Jesus is in the words, “for as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, to THE UNKNOWN GOD.” Here we have to take note of:

A). The person, who speaks, namely Paul, whose conversion, calling, and qualification to be an Apostle is recorded in Acts, chapter ix, “He is the chosen vessel to bear Jesus’s name before the gentiles” to which he was sent, Acts. ix, 15; xxii, 21, “that the Holy Ghost has separated and called,” Acts xiii, 2; Rom. i, 1.

B). The people he spoke to were the citizens of Athens, all different kinds of people, Jews and Greeks, Epicurians and Stoic philosophers, [Acts xvii] verse 18, and strangers, [Acts xvii] verse 21, very idolatrous people who needed the Apostle, Rom. i, 21, 25.

C). The place where these words were spoken, namely Areopagus, in Greek Areiospagos, the hill of Mars, a temple on a high hill in the center of the city, built to honor the God Ares, or Mars. This place
was always guarded by a thousand city servants, for here the most important affairs were dealt with, which is why the councillors who met there were called Areopagites, [Acts xvii] verse 34.

D). The occasions themselves, three in number:

A. Passing by:

i. The name of this city was Athens, a very famous and large city in Greece, on the Aegean Sea, near the Cyclade islands, where many philosophers lived who made the city famous by their public lectures, [Acts xvii] verse 18, of this city’s origin and author, etc., we will not speak here, 1 Thess. iii, 1.

ii. The Apostle walked through this city in the way of strangers and travellers, perhaps not through every street and corner, but only where he thought he might find holy places and altars, as is mentioned, to define his intentions. But why?

i). Not to satisfy the curiosity of this disciple of God, nor for worldly pleasures, the way world travellers do when they dwell in famous cities.

ii). But there was something else that made him do this: he looked, like a wise man, for a good and fitting opportunity to teach these idolators something better, so he needed to know:

a. Whether (as happens often) there could be found among these beautiful, natural, and tainted things, something that would be inclined towards truth or could enlighten his mind; for often a little thing (if it pleases God) can be a fitting means to guide the spirit of God’s children to meditation or make them think of eternity, as when the cock crowed to Peter, Matt. xxvi, 75.

b. Whether he indeed wants to find a fitting opportunity to bring these poor, blind unbelievers his heavenly message, to work on the conscience of the people, and so catch their souls more easily, Prov. xi, 30; 2 Cor. iv, 2. O, how faithful is the teacher who spares neither pains nor prudence; this must put many easy-going and lazy teachers to shame, so they can be compared to oxen, 1 Cor. ix, 9. It did teach the Apostle to be wise and serious; for he was involved not only with sly and sarcastic philosophers, but also with rebellious and idolatrous heathens.

c. The second opportunity the Apostle saw, was that he “saw their devotions.”

I. Devotions, SEBASMATA in the original language, were houses, temples, altars, statues, pillars, etc., erected on streets and corners of
heathen cities and countries, where they held religious services and showed honor, respect, and humility, where they brought offers and held their many idolatrous ceremonies, Jer. xliv, 17. This is what God's children like: devotions and religious ceremonies; that is all they do for "out of the abundance of their hearts, the mouth speaketh," but contrary to that is the truth, "the world speaks from the world and the world hears him, but we are from God," 1 John iv, 5, 6.

II. Paul saw these shrines, ANATHEOREIN in the original language, he looked from the front and from the back, again and again, very carefully and seriously weighing their multitude, neat execution, beauty, meaning, etc. That is the nature of the believer: he tries all things and keeps the good. But how could the clear eye of such a faithful servant of God occupy itself with these idolatrous objects for such a long time?

1. The Apostle certainly does not do this because:
   a. Out of uncommon curiosity he wants to satisfy his senses, as many teachers like to do, with fabulous, heathen monuments.
   b. He is amused and derives pleasure from such empty idolatries.
   c. Out of the wish to be cured from them and so be guided to Christianity, like Ahaz when he saw the altar at Tiglat Phileser, 2 Kings xvi, 10.
   d. With the intention to speak of it here and there in his sermons, to please his listeners.
   e. The intention to approve of them and to know them well and let others do the same, etc.
   f. Out of sympathy he also wanted to honor and respect them and to bow to them, Exod. xx, 4, 5.

2. But this holy Apostle looked at these holy objects:
   a. From within the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of God's house that stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry," Acts xvii, 16.
   b. With a deep amazement that rational human beings, who know God, have, that they did not glorify the true God, etc., but "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, professing themselves to be wise when they became fools," Rom. i, 22, 23.
   c. With a holy sadness, that people, created by God in his image and to his honor, are nevertheless, through Satan's cunning, "so blinded in their minds and darkened in their foolish hearts, that they
changed the truth of God into a lie and served the creature more than the Creator;” Rom. i, 21, 25; 2 Cor. iv, 4.

d. Out of love for Jesus and to bring the immortal souls of the idolators to the kingdom and the freedom of God’s children. So, having looked for the opportunity, he finds something, namely, he says,

C. I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. The Apostle proceeds very carefully with his speech, until, step by step, he reaches the point where he wants to be, so after saying that he saw the city and its devotions, he now specifically says,

I. That he found an altar.

a. What an altar is, is well-known to those who are well-versed in God’s word; it is a table or other raised structure on which offerings were burnt; many were found in Jewish holy places, as is written in Exod. xx, xxvii, and xxx, and Heb. xiii, 10. We leave the discussion of the origin, meaning, shape, material, use, etc., of altars to those who are used to spending time on such matters.

Paul found this altar, so he did not wander the city in vain, when he looked for holy places.

Why is this Apostle much more noble than some of our churchgoers? He can find something in a holy church that he can point out to others, because he goes out and looks around; but they go out often, and to Christian churches at that, but what do they bring home? Now Paul thought that this would be a good opportunity to reach his goal,—for he wanted, after all, to speak of unknown things, and so he describes this altar in more detail, so that his listeners will know which altar he means, for there were many, but this was the one that caught his eye.

II. On which was the inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

a. Because the God, in whose honor this altar was built, was unknown, the altar was also unknown to those who worshipped at holy places. Thus the inscription was made, as is usual among idolatrous heathens in many places. The Athenians in particular had so many gods and half-gods that were represented by images, that it would have been impossible for a human being to remember and distinguish them all if there had not been an inscription here and there: that was also the case with this altar, there was an inscription that read:
b. TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, AGNOTOO THEOO; this means, this altar stands here to the memory and honor of an unknown god. Several old writers, such as Suidas, Laertius, Pausanius, etc., mention this as well. We will not pause here to quote the different views of the authors as to the why, when, and for what purpose this altar was built, whether it was built during a plague epidemic that would not end, although they humbly tried to pacify their gods? Or, for instance, a war with the Persians? Or because of the darkness all over the land when Jesus died, Matt. xxvii, 45, from which the philosophers deduced that their god was suffering? Or, after hearing something of the God of Israel and his great miracles, they would also serve him, even though he was unknown to them? We shall leave this for what it is, but the most likely explanation is that they built this altar because of their superstitions, for they were so idolatrous that they had the reputation that they served all gods. They knew innumerable gods that they worshipped, but fearing that there might still be one God that they did not yet know and that they did not want to anger by not acknowledging him, that they tried to prevent this predicament by building an altar with this inscription. So if they could be convinced that there was yet another God besides the many that they already had, at least it could not be said that they did not honor him, for they did build an altar to him. O, foolishness, though it may have seemed wisdom to the people. This was also done by the heathen Corinthians, Arcadians, and many other nations with their Pantheons, temples that were dedicated to all gods; what awful ignorance, unbelief, superstition, imagination, blindness, and blasphemy is this? But still Paul found here, through God’s spirit, the right material for his message.

II[1]. For this God, he said, whom you do not know, is the one that I reveal to you.

If we want to understand correctly what this Apostle means, we have to take note of the fact that:

A. With this reasoning he primarily says that:

i. These Athenians did not know the true God in the way that he revealed himself in his holy word, for the light that God’s power could also show them, Rom. i, 19, 20, was so darkened by their submission to idolatry that they also missed the end of the law of nature, verse 21, and thus “were aliens, having no hope and without God in the world,” Eph. ii, 12.
ii. They did serve him in some way, but unknowingly, so they did not serve, for it was not with the right means to the right end, from the right principle, and for the right reason, for this religion was nothing but,

1. An outward observance of some apparent duties, such as offering, approaching, bowing, etc., so at best nothing but lip-service.
2. A simple acknowledging that he was a God, but nevertheless unknown and, therefore, still strange.
3. A kind of honor and respect that they showed him that could not come from the heart because they did not know the subject.
4. And all this, yes, even if it was a thousand times more, was without belief, love, unity, feeling, fruit, etc., but an individual way after one's own idea. So it could not be worship, but much more a sacrilege and a provocation, the more so as they also served many other gods at the same time, but to make a better and safer way known to them, the Apostle calls it worship.

A. In order to take away their prejudices that stood in the way of the acceptance of his message; these prejudices are:

1. That he preached strange and other, and therefore new gods and religion. For although the people are curious, they are nevertheless unwilling to change their gods and religion, but rather keep the ones they know, Acts xvii, 18.
2. That he teaches them new and unusual things that overturn the old. For although many yearn for new, worldly things, they prefer to stay with the old when it concerns spiritual matters, Acts xvii, 19. Although they were not far from the truth in thinking that the Apostle preached new gods and religion, he nevertheless tried to take the old away from them where they used it to prevent themselves from hearing and understanding his message. So here again his cunning way to capture souls is obvious from the fact that he opens up another way for these blinded creatures, who would not have listened if they had been sure that Paul was preaching other Gods and religion. He knew well that faith had to come through hearing, Rom. x, 17, and that is why he made them listen.

B. In order to make these idle and blinded spirits accept, search, weigh, and understand seriously what he had to say, and what they had never heard before at any of their altars and temples. The old gods and teachings did not trouble them. O, what a heavenly and wise serpent of Jesus this is, who knows how to adjust to all circum-
stances: a Jew with the Jews, a Greek with the Greeks, strong with the strong, and weak with the weak; how desirable it is to have such teachers in our time.

And so he carries his message: this one, then, whom you do not know, I reveal to you. Who reveals to whom, why, and to which end, is already clear from what we said. How the Apostle brings them the true God is clear from the following. We lack the time to explain it, but it is worth noting that the Apostle calls the way he brings his message by the name catechize, KATANGELO, for thus he becomes an angel, Rev. ii, 1, his word a gospel, Mark xvi, 15, who sent him a king, Rev. xix, where he was sent from a holy temple, Ps. xi, 4, where he was sent, the highways and the hedges, Luke xiv, 23, his listeners, inhabitants, Dan. iv, 34, 35, the way of preaching, a loud cry, Isa. lviii, 1.

APPLICATION.

Here, honored listeners, is the text, explained as shortly and simply as possible; that it may be God's will to apply it and to give each of you a small part of it.

When we look, by God's merciful light, at the precious and highly acceptable lessons and truths that can be found in it, we find:

1). How improper, revolting, abhorrent, and blasphemous it is when a person becomes estranged from his Creator by unbelief and superstition, ignorant of the world's love, blind and full of pride, and so "without God in the world," Eph. ii, 12. This is more like paganism than Christianity, Rom. i.

2). How objectionable it is when one thinks to please his Creator with superficial and habitual lip-service, in a graceless and spiritless way, without any spiritual experiencing, and, above that, to serve so many idols, like sins, the world, themselves, and Satan, Matt. [obscured], "for only the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," John iv, 23, 24; Matt. iv, 10.

Now if this faithful Apostle would come to New-Netherland and would travel through our country and our city, would his spirit not also be stirred?

1. For he would surely find many devotions, many temples and churches, respectable congregations, distinguished church councils, etc.
2. He would also find enough altars, religious people, teachers as well as church members who can show diligence, knowledge, effort, and duty, but yet have difficulty approaching the Lord, Isa. lviii, 2. Who search daily for the Lord by speaking his word, and listening, and who are baptized and take Holy Communion, who lead a particularly religious and moral life and therefore deserve a good name and praise, and who have much to say of the churches and church matters, who prophesy, know languages and sciences, "who remove mountains, bestow all their goods to the poor and give their body to be burned," 1 Cor. xiii, 1, 3. So (if one did not look with understanding eyes) it would give a mighty shine and glitter, Rev. iii, 1, "a form of godliness," 2 Tim. iii, 5.

3. But should the Apostle look at the inscription that such persons put in the balances of the kingdom, O, how quickly he would write Tekel on their foreheads, Dan. v, 27, and the inscription of the altar on their piety. How clear it would be that for so many the devotions and altars were not built to honor the true God, but rather to strange gods like self-praise, love, profit, and honor. And although some seem serious and pretend to do things to serve the true God, nevertheless there is the inscription: THE UNKNOWN GOD on their altar. But who are these people?

1. They are the ignorant, who under all the rich ways of obtaining grace, are still "dumber than the ox and the ass for they know the master's crib, but they do not know and are people that doth not consider," Isa. i, 3, "a people of no understanding," Isa. xxvii, 11, "horses and mules have no understanding," Ps. xxxii, 9; Jer. v, 21, 22.

2. There are so many, "at ease from their youth, settled on their lees," Jer. xlviii, 11, who are so sure of themselves, and without any fear for the immortality of their souls, with idle and unfounded hope that a spirit-less religion will lead their souls to eternity, and "cast themselves from the pinnacle of the temple," Matt. iv, 5, 6, "careless daughters that are at ease," Isa. xxxii, 9; xvii, 8; Amos vi, 1.

3. There are so many whose hearts are rigid, Isa. lxiii, 17, who are of stone, "like iron and brass," Jer. vi, 28, who do not want to be beaten or destroyed, Isa. xvi, 2, but "walk in the stubbornness of their heart," Deut. xxix, 19, "their neck is like an iron sinew and their forehead is brass," Isa. xlviii, 4.
4. There are many "with conscience seared with hot iron," 1 Tim. iv, 2, who do not see the greatness of the Lord, but prophesy against this land, Jer. xxi, 10. They are "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. lvii, 20, 21.

5. But there are many despisers of true and trusted means to obtain grace, and its different advantages, thinking of the written laws of the Lord as strange, Hos. viii, 12.

6. There are so many who postpone repentance, who are used to the wilderness of the unrepentant state, Jer. ii, 24, that they resent it when they are given a well-meant warning, and will answer, with the devil, "what do we have to do with thee, art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Matt. viii, 29, "the time is not come that the Lord's house should be built," Hag. i, 2, but rather "eat and drink my soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years," Luke xii, 19, 20.

7. There are so many mocking, contemptuous, skimping Epicureans, who never stop, day or night, to reject those who experience the knowledge and worship of God, and who know and serve God, and call out to them, like Goliath, to defy Israel, 1 Sam. xvii, 9-25. And who impose on many people, against their will, their old, rotten, and stinking routine of religion.

8. Besides the ones mentioned above, who are easy to identify, there are many others who have no more than:

a. A superficial, literal knowledge of some chapters that touch on the way of righteousness, 2 Pet. ii, 21.

b. A moral and outward piousness, in name and form, Rev. iii, 1; 2 Tim. iii, 5; 2 Pet. ii. 20.

c. Lukewarm agreement, and, yes, Brothers of the road to redemption and rebirth, no experience of the knowledge and worship of God, Acts i, 13; xxvi, 27.

d. A multitude of superficial duties and piousness, going to church, taking communion, praying, bowing, singing, asking to be saved, listening, and so struggle to seek, know, and serve the Lord.

All these people, although with an element of truth in their soul, neither experience nor truly serve God; because they were never really serious about it, never really feared, chose, loved, obeyed, left everything or followed him.
But in order not to hurt any simple well-blessed souls, or even less to tie the hands of the godless, be free, dear listeners, to come closer, so your hearts may be touched and so you may know who does and does not truly experience, know, and serve God.

1. He who truly knows God is constantly aware of his own insignificance, his unworthiness, odiousness, cursedness, lack of power, and impotence to help himself, making him sigh many times, “O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” Rom. vii, 24. Contrary to this, the routine believer has no true impression of his own deprivation; he is not troubled, Ps. lxxiii, 5, 12.

2. He who truly knows and serves God, has a vivid impression of God and his spiritual being through Jesus, Matt. xi, 27. He knows that God is just; for in his conviction and discovery he can say with David: You are just, O Lord, in your speech and in your judgment, Ps. v, 6.

He knows that God is compassionate; when he was promised that his heart would be cleansed and his sins forgiven through Jesus’s blood and spirit, he could sing like David: “Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,” Ps. ciii, 13, 16.

He knows that God is all sufficient, “since out of his fullness in Jesus he can impart grace for grace,” John i, 16; when he called on him and was heard, he could say, “God is sufficiently rich for all them that call on him,” Rom. x, 12.

He knows that God is truthful, for he, walking in God’s mercy, experiencing the fulfillment of God’s promises in his soul, he can say: “Look in the book of the Lord and read, not one thing shall fail, nothing will be missing,” Isa. xxxiv, 16.

He knows that God is independent; this he experiences whenever he considers that God with his grace has passed by so many and has turned in to him to dwell in his heart, John xiv, 23, which makes him exclaim, “What am I, O Lord, that thou art mindful of me and have visited me,” Ps. viii, 4.

He knows God’s wisdom from experience; for when all was lost to him and all his people, when he doubted that he could be delivered from hell or brought to salvation, his heart of stone taken away and so be delivered from death, God knew how to solve it, namely by the death of his Son, which often made them cry out: “To the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever,” 1 Tim. i, 17.
In one word, all that God has revealed as necessary to stay true to his word, to know him and his Son, weigh with an eternal weight on his soul, and through the Spirit from up high he does not only hear "by the hearing of the ear, but sees it with his eye," Job xlii, 5-6; John i, 1. On the other hand, all that a naked and dead hypocrite knows of God's Spirit, is only hearsay, so God is still unknown to him, for "no man knoweth the Father as those to whom Jesus has revealed him," Matt. xi, 27.

3. Those who know God, have chosen him and him alone to be their temporary and eternal portion, with Asaph, Ps. lxxiii, 25, 26. "What do I have in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, and my portion forever. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is," Heb. xi, 6, 24, 26. But the hypocrite is still attached to the world. So where his treasure is, is also his heart. He is from the world, speaks from the world, and the world hears him, 1 John, iv, 5.

4. He who knows God, hears him, he goes in humility, respect, and reverence, with hate against all evil, Ps. cxix, 128, and love and esteem for all things right, Ps. cxxxix, 24, is very much afraid that, when he walks in God's presence, he will not behave in a worthy manner, which is why he continuously calls for direction and influence, Ps. cxliii, 10. But the hypocrite does not care how he behaves as long as people honor him and his conscience is at peace, but he "will not behold the majesty of the Lord," Isa. xxvi, 10.

5. He who experiences God, also serves him willingly in spirit and truth, 1 Pet. i, 15; John iv, 23. "He finds delight in the law of the Lord," Ps. i, 2; Rom. vii, 22, approves it, Rom. ii, 18, with complete and willing obedience; he wants what God wants and not what God does not want, Ps. cxix, 128. The truest, most faithful and distinguished serving of God is also most dear to him, Ps. cxli, 5. But he who gives nothing but lip-service in self-honor and love is but a burden.

6. He who knows God loves everything about him, his "words are sweeter than honey," Ps. xix, 10; cxix, 127, and values that above all else. He loves God's people, also the most zealous, the most knowledgeable and serious; "everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him," 1 John v, 1, he honors those that know and who are known by the Lord, Ps. xv, 4; 1 Tim. i, 5; 2 Tim. iii, 5; Isa. lxi, 9, and hates those who hate the Lord,
Ps. cxxxix, 19-21. But the hypocrite thinks that every one who appears to be outwardly good, is good, Num. xvi, 3, or he takes loyal souls to be hypocrites, John vii, 13, or, if he loves them, it is not because of their work or holiness.

7. He who knows God “shall confess him before men as well as in his heart,” Matt. x, 32, “shows forth his praises,” 1 Pet. ii, 9, tells what God has done for his soul, Ps. lxvi, 16, through words and deeds and prayer; and when he stumbles and offends God, he does not stay down, but soon gets up again, and asks forgiveness through Jesus’s blood and walks more circumspectly, Jam. iii, 2; Prov. xxiv, 16; Matt. xxvi, 75; 1 John ii, 1; Eph. v, 15. But the hypocrite either is ashamed or too shy to say what is in his heart, or thinks of those who do that, as hypocrites. And he thinks he can be a good Christian in his heart, although his mouth does not confirm that; so he is ashamed to others of Christ and his words, but he is proud to speak of worldly things, 1 John iv, 5.

8. He who knows God increases his knowledge so he will know him better and also increases his spiritual thinking through which he is led from one mystery to another, until it becomes part of his life and his spirit, Gal. ii, 20; Isa. xxxviii, 16. To fathom the mysterious ways of God “the Lord waketh him by morning, he awaketh his ear to hear as the learned,” Isa. 1, 4, “he thinks where he lies,” Ps. iv, 8, and can say with David: “O, God, how precious also are thy thoughts to me. How great the sum of them. If I could count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee,” Ps. cxxxix, 17, 18. This makes his spirit grow stronger and better day by day, 1 Pet. ii, 2, 3. And when he thinks that he is less in a state of grace, he is distressed and prays, fasts, and sits up, yes, he will use every possible means, etc. But the hypocritical, habitual Christian is either always the same or loses knowledge, or does not become better in spirit even when he increases in knowledge.

9. He who knows God, puts his trust in him, delights in his divine providence for better or worse, and when he suffers for his Christianity’s sake, he deems himself lucky, yearns for patience and comfort, giving everything in God’s hand, Ps. xxxvii, 5; xiii, 6; ix, 11, and remains abiding and faithful to the end, Rev. ii, 10. But the hypocrite, unconcerned or displeased by the way God governs, looks for help in the world and among the people, thinking sometimes that he does
God a favor when he oppresses the true believers and usurps God’s inheritance.

The root of this knowledge is in all those who experience and serve God, who know him and are known by him, John x, 14. What do you think, dear listeners? Do you have such a root of experiencing and knowing salvation in your heart? “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge with righteous judgment,” 1 Cor. xi, 31; John vii, 24.

O, if all of you, big and small, young and old, rich and poor, man and woman, would examine yourselves, and look into a mirror that does not flatter, how quickly most of you would see that your religion up till now was devoted to an unknown God. Hear then, you foolish and erring sinners, who feel nothing and so have never known or worshipped God in truth or in spirit, you are the most miserable and unhappy creatures on earth, “you shall conceive chaff, you shall bring forth stubble, your breath, as fire, shall devour you,” Isa. xxxiii, 11, for:

1. You do not know God and all his holy matters, “without hope, and without God in the world,” Eph. ii, 12. Without Jesus, without a haven, without mediator, without heaven, without everything that brings happiness to your soul. And O, how awful it must be to live under the curse and tune of the children of hell and the devil, Satan’s prey, a slave of damnation, a henchman of the eternal enemy, who will never free themselves from Satan’s snare, Eph. ii, 3; Matt. xxiii, 15; 2 Tim. ii, 26; John viii, 40, 43.

2. All your religion, prayer, and sacrifice is “an abomination to God,” and does not delight him, Prov. xxviii, 9; xv, 8; Ps. cix, 7, “all your thoughts, resolutions and ways are wicked,” Prov. xv, 9, 26; xxi, 4; Isa. i, 7, 15. You torment God with your ways, and if your best ways are wicked, how much more wicked will your evil ways be, when the light that is in you is darkness, how deep the darkness itself must be.

3. And how unbearable it will be for you when God will judge you for all of this; and after his judgment will “speak to you in his wrath and vex you in his sore displeasure,” Ps. ii, 5, and will say: “depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I know you not,” Luke xiii, 27. How then will your dead and routine belief in an unknown God help you, or your calling out: Lord, Lord, we have eaten and drunk in your presence, you have taught in our streets, we have
exorcised devs in your name, prophesied, and done great deeds, Matt. vii, 23. Then you will experience your religion in hell, and not in heaven, as you had hoped.

Understand this, you God forsakers, you ignorant, you careless, you hard ones, you fake Christians, hear, so “God will not tear you to pieces and deliver none,” Ps. 1, 22, for “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” Heb. x, 31. He shall surely “take vengeance in flaming fire on them that know him not and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 2 Thess. i, 8, 9.

Is there one among you “who trembles at God’s word,” Isa. lxvi, 2, eager, after tormenting this forgiving God with your unknown religion, to appear before him with a deep sigh, saying: “Dear Lord, what must I do to be saved?” Acts xvi, 30. Take good note of this:

I. You have to remember that the God that calls you now “has no pleasure in your death,” Ezek. xxxiii, 11. He wants you to know the truth through Jesus as the eternal mediator. Thus he will also forgive the times of ignorance. But now that he preaches repentance, will you sincerely try to know the Father through the blood of Jesus, and make your peace with him? And “he will in no way cast you out,” John vi, 37. And Isa. xlv, 19, says: no one “shall seek him in vain.” He, then, is your Creator, who commands you to come to him.

II. You must also remember that he can accept you if you approach him through Jesus, for he is always merciful, etc. Under such hope of being saved by the grace offered to you, you must do the following:

i. You must pray deeply, intensely, and humbly that “the eyes of your understanding will be enlightened,” Eph. i, 17, 18.

a. To discover yourself and to think of all your sins and misdeeds, like a hellworthy wretch, nothing but a sacriligious abomination before God, deserving death and damnation every minute of the day, forfeiting the smallest grace, and having not known, nor served the Creator, but having dishonored, mocked, and transgressed against him, Jer. iii, 13. Think quietly and dwell on this.

b. To become truly shattered and destroyed by these thoughts, to “repent in dust and ashes,” Job xlii, 6, to melt, as it were, in your own insignificance, and humbly lie down at Jesus’s feet, as a desperate and hopeless, tired and troubled, hungry and thirsty, depressed and timid, lost sheep.
c. But not doubting Jesus's willingness and pleasure in showing you his way to redemption, you will have to learn how to experience and know God through his Son, and how to embrace him with both arms in the deepest trust and without opposition, saying: "I believe, O Lord, help me in my doubts," [Mark ix, 24]; in other words, to approach Jesus and to surrender to him and embrace him with your heart, the way it is: unclean and deadly.

d. To leave behind you all that is in conflict with this reconciliation: Satan, sin, the world, self-righteousness, your flesh and blood, yes, even your father and mother, etc., even life itself, just to follow Jesus, Phil. iii, 7, and through him to know and serve the Father, to follow the lamb wherever it goes, Rev. xiv, 4.

ii. That is the end to which you have to go to penetrate and master the law and testimony of God's word, which bears witness to life and is the rule after which you must learn to know and serve God; so you have to listen and keep this in your heart, especially when you hear it from faithful shepherds, who know Jesus's sheep, who know when God's text can wound, or, when wounded, how to heal your heart.

iii. You must stay with the small flock of Jesus's sheep, who are often, because of their experienced Christianity, called worldly by the hypocrites. Do you not know who they are? Watch carefully for the hoofprints of the sheep, Song of Sol. i, 8. Ask them to pray for you, Ps. xxxvii, 37; Zach. viii, 23. But turn away from this damned humanity, go from Babel, you my people, so you will not share its sins.

iv. Beware carefully of evil, even the appearance of evil, stand back from injustice, and adorn your religion with truth and a holy and sober life in this world, Titus i, 16.

v. Do not be afraid of the hatred of the world and the slander of the people, nor of hardship and suppression, Isa. li, 7, 8, for through these you will enter the kingdom, Acts xiv, 22. It is better to suffer temporarily than to die forever, and to be mocked by people in this life, than by the devil for eternity. Do not think that everything will be to your liking twice, in this time and in eternity.

That is how you can be helped. O, how the Lord would reveal himself to you, how indescribable your happiness would be, your peace would be like a river.
Now, we pray you in Jesus's name, as though God himself prayed for you, make your peace with God. Return from your evil ways; return to the strong God. O, that we could call you by name to persuade and press you to come to the experience of divine knowledge and service. O, if only no one among you would stray from the living God. Please, listen, you young people who are still in the bloom of life and are the right people to experience and serve God. O, act faithfully with your precious and immortal souls; why should you not?

1. It behooves you; for he who calls you has blessed you with life, health, food, and a roof, time and opportunity, happiness and prosperity, and has shielded you from all you deserve, like hell and damnation, Ps. ciii, 4. And would you not know such a good God?

2. Nothing is more pleasing, sweet, and entertaining than to know him and serve him from nearby, Ps. cxxiii, 28; 1 Pet. ii, 3; Ps. xxxiv, 9; Matt. xi, 28; Ps. cxix, 12.

3. What could be of more value to you than to know the Lord? It enriches your soul now and to eternity, John xvii, 3; Isa. liii, 11; Jer. ix, 23, “those who find me, find life and rejoice in the Lord,” Prov. xxviii, 5.

4. Now is the time of need, Heb. iv, 16. Will you wait until tomorrow? “Might not this night thy soul be required of thee?” Luke xii, 20. O, “if thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the thing which belongs unto thy peace!” Luke xix, 41, 42.

5. And if you will not come to him to receive life, if you want to let this “day of salvation,” 2 Cor. vi, 2, pass without knowing or serving him, what will this mean, but that you are willful, unconverted, stubborn and proud, worldly and sinful, and so “sin willfully after having received the knowledge of the truth,” Heb. x, 26.

O, save yourself for the sake of your soul and God and your salvation, “seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near,” Isa. lv, 6. “Strive to enter the gate” while it is still open, Luke xiii, 24, “enter ye the straight gate,” Matt. vii, 13; before it closes and is not opened again, Rev. iii, 7.

Do you not want to come? “But if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears,” Jer. xiii, 17. But so you will know that this is serious, I bear witness of it to the holy trinity, Rom. i, 9; 2 Cor. i, 22, “wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am
pure from the blood of all men,” Acts xx, 26; Ezek. iii, 19. If you will not learn how to know God properly, you will never be part of him, “he that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear,” etc., Ezek. iii, 7.

Now a word of consolation, to conclude, to God’s children, those who know him, and are true worshippers, and who serve him in truth and in spirit.

A. “Remember his marvelous works, that he hath done to your soul, ye seed of Abraham, his servant, ye children of Jacob, his chosen,” Ps. cv, 5, 6. Show forth his praises, 1 Pet. ii, 9, 10. “Thanking the Father, who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,” etc., Col. i, 12, 13; 1 Thess. v, 5.

B. Always keep this in your thoughts: your emptiness and his fullness, your insignificance and his perfection, his power and your impotence, his sufficiency and your insufficiency, etc., Ps. cxxiii, 2, so “you shall fear always,” Prov. xxviii, 14.

C. “Exercise thyself unto godliness,” 1 Tim. iv, 7, and as you “have received Jesus, so walk in him,” Col. iii, 6, seeking and remembering “those things which are above,” Col. iii, 1, 2, by persevering and staying awake, in prayer and gratitude “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,” [Col. iii, 16].

Walk holy as lights among the damned, adding virtue to belief, knowledge to virtue, patience to knowledge and godliness, and to godliness brotherly love, 1 Pet. i, 5, 8; Col. iv, 2, 6; iii, 16.

D. Do not be astonished “if the world hates you,” John xv, 18, but “endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ,” so you shall “also reign with him,” 2 Tim. ii, 3, 11, 12.

E. Do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, “nor stand in the way of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful,” Ps. i, 1; 1 Tim. v, 22. But “do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, but exhort one another,” Heb. x, 25. Pray for one another and for those who are still outside.

F. And should you stumble, get up again and seek Jesus’s reconciliation and “walk even straighter,” Jam. iii, 2; Eph. v, 14, 15; 1 John ii, 1. Do not sin again, so nothing worse will happen.

G. Persevere to the end, Matt. xxvi, 14. Be faithful to the death, Rev., ii, 10.
Then God will reveal himself to your soul in this life; it will be good “to draw near to God and to walk with him,” Ps. lxxiii, 28, “tasting that the Lord is gracious,” 1 Pet. ii, 3; Ps. xxxiv, 9.

After this life you will “know him and see him as he is,” 1 Cor. xiii, 12; 1 John iii, 2. Then your soul will “behold his face in righteousness, you shall be satisfied with his likeness, when you awake,” Ps. vii, 15. You will find pleasures in his right hand forever more, [Ps. xvi, 11].

AMEN.

A reflection on the dead state of the General Church.

O, quencher of parched souls,
O, great gravedigger,
Whose banner is the cross:
Your church, (if I may say so),
And without concealing it,
Is more like a charnel house,
Packed with bones,
That have long been stinking,
Decayed and rotten.
Your pruning is in vain,
Dead wood will not grow,
Nor a dead vine bud,
But this is to be mourned,
That these weak legs,
Say they are alive,
Healthy and vigorous.
O dust, O slack, O ashes,
You do not know the truth.
O legs, stones, tombs,
Show us your works,
If you are alive.
Ah, if these were lies,
How I would rejoice
In what makes God’s people happy.