

# THE STANDARD

*Bearer*

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## MEDITATION

### THE SINGING PILGRIM

*"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Psalm 119:54*

A pilgrim is a person who travels through foreign lands; specifically one who journeys to some sacred place in the performance of a vow or to obtain some form of Divine blessing.

The pilgrim of my text is the child of God, travelling through the world to the heavenly Canaan. Yes, he has taken a vow, and expects some form of Divine blessing. Moreover, he is travelling through this present world to the country of his second birth.

The spiritual pilgrim is a visionary.

And his vision is the New Jerusalem, the New world of God's pleasures that is coming.

He knows that the old world is fast passing away. By the Word of the Lord that old world is on the way to its final burning, and out of this burning the New world will appear. And the pilgrim knows that he will have his portion in that New world.

Therefore, he has his heart, soul and mind on the New world.

This present world has no charm for him; in fact, he hates this present world. He knows that the character of this present world is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

And so we hear his chant: Do not detain me, for I am going where the streams of life are ever flowing. Whatever you do, do not detain me: I can tarry, I can tarry but a day!

You cannot even say that his heart and soul are set on the present heaven where God is seated on His throne, and the angels and the souls of men made righteous are singing and making music.

No, his heart is set on the world that is coming, the world that will stand unto all eternity.

\* \* \* \*

This pilgrim has another name, and it is closely related to the name "pilgrim." In fact, some of our modern languages have translated the last word of my text: "stranger-ship."

That other name is "stranger." And it is really another aspect of the name pilgrim.

A pilgrim is necessarily also a stranger.

It relates to his contact with the present world.

He is strange to the ways of this world in which we live. He does not fit here at all.

You see, he is born from God and from heaven. That is, he is regenerated. His root is different, and so his life is different.

Oh, it does not mean that he fails in his vocation and calling. Not at all. His endeavor is to be the best in his class. He wants to be the best carpenter around, or brick layer, or mason. He wants to do his job well. He knows that God wants him to be in this world for a spell, and to do all things for God's sake, and to do them well. And so he farms, does carpenter work, clerks in stores, works in an office, etc. And he desires to excel.

But here is the point: all through his work-a-day life, he has his eye on God, on heaven, on the glory of God's Name, on the revelation of that Name in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Yes, he possesses a wife, but as not possessing; he possesses land and houses and money, but as not possessing.

For he is a stranger here.

His life is God, heaven, and eternity.

\* \* \* \*

Finally, there is a third word in this connection which we must look at. It is in close connection to the other two names: pilgrim and stranger. That third name is "sojourner."

That name indicates that because of the fact that he is a pilgrim and stranger, he sojourns in this world. And that word means that he lives "alongside" the world. It means that he is spiritually entirely different from this world.

The life of this present world is wholly corrupt, as indicated above. It is full of the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

Hence, he lives alongside.

That quality of our pilgrim was plainly shown by the great sojourners Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God purposely sent these three men into the world in order to be a constant reminder to His church throughout all the ages that we are going where the streams of life are ever flowing.

These three men did not own a house, ever. They lived in tabernacles, that is, in tents. For 100, 180, and 147 years respectively.

There they go: up and down Palestine, sometimes a little while in Egypt, but ever dwelling in tabernacles. Alongside the world.

All they ever owned was a buryingplace for themselves and their wives.

And they are the types of all God's beloved people of all the ages.

In the world, but not of the world.

Do you see our pilgrim, stranger, sojourner?

\* \* \* \*

Listen, he sings his songs.

He is the happiest man alive. His happiness is the only happiness in this Godforsaken world. You may hear laughter in the world, and hear of pleasure and joy, but it is not true. Believe it not. Even in their joy they taste the bitterness of death. I have tasted it myself.

Let us listen to his songs.

Thy statutes have been my songs in the home of my pilgrimage.

Thy statutes!

What are they? They are the same as God's mercies, salvation, word, judgments, law, precepts, testimonies, commandments or name! I have taken the foregoing from the verses immediately preceding, and a verse or two further. Psalm 119 extols the Lord because of His wonderful law and word.

You know, there is such a thing as the law of God. Or the Word of God.

As soon as God created a moral, rational, ethical being, He also created a law, a word for him. And if that creature lived according to that law or word, he would be wonderfully happy and content. Look at Adam and Eve, as they are

strolling in the beautiful garden of Eden. They love God and His law.

But as soon as you depart from that law or word there is horror for you. Listen to the verse preceding my text: "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake Thy law!"

But how about our singing pilgrim? Is he not a sinner like unto the rest?

Yes, but here I must say two things. First, he is born again. I believe I told you that already. Well, that means that in the depth of his heart he loves the law of God again, as also His Word. And through the further operation of God's grace and Spirit, he attempts every day to live according to that law and Word, even though every night he lies in the dust and cries: O God, be merciful to me, the sinner! And, second, this singing pilgrim looks at the statutes of God and His Word, through the prism of the Cross of Calvary. And therefore he sings his merry song. He knows that God has forgiven him all his transgressions, and prepared for him an everlasting righteousness in Jesus the Lord.

David sang his tune in the Old Testament for he saw Jehovah and the blood of the innocents. And far off he saw also the Messiah.

We sing this song looking back of the blood of The Innocent, namely, Jesus, our beloved Redeemer.

I've heard them singing: I will sing of my Redeemer!

And so our singing pilgrim goes on his way, ever singing the songs of redemption and salvation. God's law is sweet to him, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

\* \* \* \*

Wonder what makes him sing so sweetly!

What is the motive, what is the main thrust of his song?

I will try and tell you.

The sweetest chord of his music, the sweetest strains of his singing is this: he loves God.

You see, beloved reader, you cannot separate God's statutes and His Word from God Himself.

God's statutes are a reflection of the sweetness of God's inmost heart.

Did you not hear the fathers say: The law of God is fulfilled in just one word, namely, love?

There is your answer. This pilgrim loves the Lord, and therefore he loves His statutes.

That love of God is spread abroad in his heart at the moment of his regeneration, and that same love came to his consciousness in the moment of his conversion. And that love of God is ever his portion here on earth.

You may kill him; you may fix him on the stake; you may torture him in the chamber of horrors: but he will never

cease to love God. And in his dying breath he will say: Lord, forgive them: they know not what they do! He is taught such by the sweetness of the love of God.

And so our pilgrim is singing, although I must add one more element. His voice often breaks while he is singing.

And the reason is, first, because he is still a sinner.

And the second reason is that he is still so far from his Home.

He longs for God, and yearns for heaven, and thirsts for the companionship of the rest of the church and the holy angels of God.

But he will keep on singing, until God will say: Come higher, up, My dear child! Your place is now ready!

And then the tears are wiped away!

\* \* \* \*

I wrote the foregoing as a sort of epitaph for our brother Bern Lubbers.

He sang the songs of David on his plow and harrow. His song was in tune with heaven.

But suddenly God said to him: It is enough! Come home!

His song is now perfect, for he sings in heaven! Amen.

G.V.

#### IN MEMORIAM

Suddenly the Lord took to Himself our Beloved Husband, Father, Grandfather, Great-Grandfather, and Brother,

BERNARD LUBBERS, aged 79 years.

We know that his life was Christ, and therefore his death was gain. That is our comfort in this piercing grief.

Mrs. Bernard Lubbers—Meyer  
Mr. and Mrs. Dick Klamer—Lubbers  
Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Lubbers—Schut  
Mr. and Mrs. George Schut—Lubbers  
Mr. and Mrs. John Lubbers—Klomp  
Mr. and Mrs. Reynold VanBronkhorst—Lubbers  
Mr. and Mrs. Fay Cornell—Lubbers  
Miss Geraldine Lubbers  
Mr. and Mrs. Rhine Lubbers—Veltema  
Mr. Cory Lubbers  
33 grandchildren  
28 great-grandchildren

Psalm 119:54

Hudsonville, Michigan

#### IN MEMORIAM

Our Men's Society wish to express their sympathy with their fellow members Gerrit Lubbers, John Lubbers and Rhine Lubbers in the loss of their Father,

BERNARD LUBBERS

whom the Lord took to Himself Wednesday, December 28, 1960.

May the God of all grace comfort their hearts at the thought of the glorious resurrection from the dead.

The Hudsonville Men's Society  
Rev. Gerrit Vos, President  
Harry Zwak, Vice-President

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## EDITORIALS

### **"The Adam Question"**

The above is the title of a pamphlet I received containing a criticism of a certain decision adopted by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America. The criticism was made by the Sixth Reformed Church of Paterson, New Jersey and was published in pamphlet form by the Consistory of that Church.

The reader will probably remember that, some time ago, I wrote about the case of a certain candidate for the ministry who failed in his classical examination because he denied that Adam was a historical person which denial was, of course, also a denial of the historicity of the second and third chapters of the book of Genesis. I did not follow the case which, if I remember well, was appealed to Synod, but as one reads this pamphlet one receives the impression that Synod virtually takes the same position as the candidate.

In this pamphlet the Consistory of Sixth Paterson, first of all, enters into the legal question. It maintains that Synod did not have the right to maintain the statements in question. We read:

"Does a General Synod have a legal right to adopt a statement as to the belief of the churches and give it official sanction, or even a semi-official sanction, without any referral of it to the classes and churches, without any previous discussion of it in the classes and churches, and without a vote of approval of it by the classes and churches?"

This question the Consistory answers in the negative:

"We hold that General Synod does not have a legal right to do so, because obviously, in the nearest comparable case, it is unlawful for a General Synod to amend the Constitution. Any attempt to do so would be rejected as an unwarranted and illegal usurpation. Synod can only recommend that the classes approve an amendment. The classes discuss it, and if two-thirds of them approve it, only then can General Synod declare it in effect as law.

"Now if such is the case with the Constitution, so that no single session of a General Synod has the right to amend it, then certainly, in a much more serious case, the adoption of statements affecting the Standards, which are above the Constitution, with which the Constitution must be in harmony, then how much less does a General Synod have a right, nay rather, how much more must it be illegal to decide theological questions in a single session of General Synod. At the very least, the statement of the Theological Commission ought to have been sent to the classes and churches and vote thereon. At the very least, no statement of such a nature should be adopted or issued in the name of the Reformed Church in America without the concurrence by vote, of two-thirds of the classes."

With this we can all agree. The opposite of this is sheer hierarchy.

As to the statement itself which was adopted by the General Synod, it is, evidently, the same that was proposed by the Theological Commission, which is as follows:

"Fathers and brethren:

"Three matters were referred to the Theological Commission by the General Synod of 1959. The overture from the Classis of Pella, relative to the preparation of a New Statement of Faith, by its very nature a long range project. The Commission is making this matter the subject of a continuing study in line with the overture. The overture from the Classis of Paramus, relative to the Inspiration of Scripture, presents basic questions of the meaning of revelation, the nature and function of creedal statements, the interpretation of the Belgic Confession, etc. After considerable discussion the Commission felt it advisable to make this subject a matter of special study and present a statement on it to the next General Synod. Relative to the overture from the Classis of South Grand Rapids on the historicity of Genesis, the Commission offers the following declaration.

"The members of the Theological Commission are unanimous in affirming the historical character of the Book of Genesis. The biblical writer intended it to be a presentation of history, and it was so understood by the New Testament writers. However we must be clear as to the nature of this history.

"It is of the essence of biblical faith that God is active in, and reveals Himself through events. God makes known His justice through acts of justice, His mercy through acts of mercy, His salvation through acts of deliverance. God has carried forward His redemptive activity through the events recorded in the Bible. Therefore, when Israel confessed her faith, she did so by recounting God's mighty acts on her behalf. The significance of the Exodus e.g. was memorialized in the formula, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," and was remembered and celebrated at the great religious festivals. The preaching of the early church was, likewise, a recounting of God's redemptive activity in the life, ministry, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. Two things stand out in biblical faith: 1. God is personally active in His world; 2. Events are important because of their meaning for faith. From this standpoint the narratives in Genesis are to be viewed — as recounting how God is active in these events, and as significant because of what has been revealed through them. The faith of the Bible is inseparably tied to historical events. We protest against all attempts to divorce faith from history and to reduce the word which God would speak to us to abstract information about His nature and/or universal principles of moral behavior."

Here we must stop a moment.

We naturally ask the question: what do the members of the Theological Commission mean when they speak of "history" and of "events." They affirm unanimously the

historical character of the book of Genesis. They say that "the biblical writer intended it to be a presentation of history." At the same time, however, they state that "we must be clear as to the nature of this history."

What do they mean?

Do they mean that the first three or the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis present a record of "events" or of facts as they actually occurred? Do they believe that God created the world in six days? Do they believe that it is an actual fact that Adam was the first real, historical person, that God formed him out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life? Do they believe that God formed the first woman from a rib of Adam? Do they believe, when they speak of the history recorded in the book of Genesis, that the garden of Eden was an actual garden and that the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil were actual trees? Is it actual history, not only that man fell but that his fall consisted in the disobedience of eating of the forbidden fruit? Do they maintain that Satan tempted the woman and, through the woman, tempted Adam, and that the devil came in the form of a serpent?

In one word: what do they mean by the history recorded in the first chapters of Genesis? What kind of history is it that does not record actual "events" or facts?

They furnish us with an answer, although the answer is vague, in what follows. And now we quote again:

"It is of the essence of biblical history that it is always placed in a religious context. The prophets and apostles are the great writers and interpreters of history. It was God's purpose, through the Scriptural authors, to communicate to the covenant community the religious meaning of events. This is specialized treatment of selected events. By and large the writers of Scripture are not primarily interested in recording history in the manner of modern scientific research, i.e., in presenting the exhaustive and detailed accounts of what actually happened. What is set forth is a witness, a proclaiming 'from faith to faith' the mighty deeds of God for our redemption, together with their significance for life. Through various literary means — poetry, prose, parable, sage, etc. — God is concerned to reveal that in history which transcends mere factual report — e.g. the spiritual forces at work, the divinely appointed goal, the divine activity, the place of the event within the divine program and its significance for faith. It is just this beyondness, this transcendent element, which makes history important to the biblical author. We believe that the book of Genesis should be read in the light of this biblical faith and this understanding of history. It is out of a deep religious concern for the biblical word that we wish to caution against a superficial treatment of biblical history which imposes upon it a framework basically secular and essentially foreign to it. All such attempts are bound to lead to error and misunderstanding."

There you have it.

It is all very general and vague. It does not furnish an

answer to the questions we asked. From this part of the report of the Theological Commission we still do not learn what they mean by history. Negatively, indeed they state that "by and large the writers of Scripture are not primarily interested in recording history in the manner of modern scientific research, i.e., in presenting the exhaustive and detailed accounts of what actually happened."

But what are they interested in?

Are they recording actual facts or are they not? To be sure, in the "events" God revealed Himself to His people, although He also revealed Himself in the spoken Word and not only in the facts of history. But what we are interested in is an answer to the question: were these "events" actual facts and did they really happen just as they were recorded? If they were not facts and if they did not actually take place, and if the biblical writers, nevertheless, presented them as historical facts, they are simply liars, and God surely does not reveal Himself through the lie.

To my mind, the Theological Commission and also the General Synod that adopted this report do not believe that the first three chapters of Genesis record actual history. This is also evident from what follows in this same report:

"All the members of the Theological Commission hold to the fact of creation by God." We ask how? As it is recorded in Genesis 1?

They also hold "to the reality of the fall." Again we ask how? As it is recorded in Genesis 3? They hold to the fall of man "as an event within history." We naturally ask: what kind of history? Why do they not define history? And they also hold to "the involvement of the entire race in sin." And again we ask: how? Was it because, as Scripture presents the matter, the historical Adam was the head of the entire human race and his first sin is imputed to all so that, as the Bible clearly speaks of it, we must believe in original guilt? And was the entire race organically in the loins of Adam, so that we must also speak of the original corruption of the human nature?

More of this in our next issue, D.V.

H.H.

### Teaching Positions Available

The South Holland-Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed School Association plans, D.V., to open its school in September of 1961.

In accordance with the rules of our Federation that "schools are permitted to advertise their need for personnel as soon as a vacancy becomes known," we hereby notify all teachers and prospective teachers that teaching positions will be available for grades one through Junior High.

The Association for Protestant Reformed Education  
9402 South 53rd Court, Oak Lawn, Illinois

## A S T O B O O K S

*The Old Testament View Of Revelation* by James G. S. Thomson. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich., Price \$2.50.

This is in many respects a valuable book. It can be read, I think, not only by theologians, but also by any intelligent reader. The transcribed Hebrew terms will cause not much difficulty because they are translated and explained. The author begins by giving his definition of revelation and then, in the first chapter, continues to discuss the vocabulary of revelation, its necessity, act, word and response in revelation, its possibility, and closes this chapter by a page or two on man's knowledge of God in which he emphasizes that man can never know God fully but only in part. The next two chapters speak of the means whereby God reveals Himself such as the acts of God, dreams and visions, the Angel of Jehovah, etc. In chapter 4 he discusses the Word of God both as the spoken and written Word. And in the two closing chapters he speaks of the God of revelation.

The weakness of the book is, to my mind, exactly that the author, as the title of the book already indicates, treats of revelation in the Old Testament only. Yet, even so he could and should have found the revelation of Christ (tabernacle and temple, sacrifice and shadows) also in the Old Testament. This he does not do. This is already evident from the definition he offers of revelation: "the self disclosure of God," or: "it means quite simply that God makes Himself known." This should be: "the self disclosure of God in Christ." Apart from Jesus Christ there is no revelation of God, not even "in nature."

Nevertheless, this book is very much worth reading and as such I recommend it to the intelligent reader. H.H.

*The Church's Witness To The World*, by Dr. P. Y. De Jong. Published by the Pella Publishing Inc., Pella, Iowa. Price \$3.95; paper copy \$3.00.

In a Preface the author writes: "This book attempts too much and accomplishes too little." I do not know whether or not this is true, but I did have the experience that when I read the title of the book *The Church's Witness To The World* and then opened it and started to read it, I was somewhat surprised for the title caused me to expect something different from what the contents of the book offers.

The book is a rather elaborate and thorough as well as sound exposition of the first fifteen articles of the Belgic or Netherland Confession of Faith.

The author first writes a rather long but very interesting introduction in which he discusses the rise of the Reformation, the author Guido de Bres, the official adoption of the Confession, etc. Thereupon he begins to discuss each article, including article 15.

The style is clear and the language is good. I recommend this book to our readers. It may also be used as a guide for the discussion of this Confession in our societies, for which it was originally intended.

Of course, this does not mean that I subscribe to the entire contents of the book. I do not, for instance, agree with what the author writes about "the small remnants" on pp. 263 ff. H.H.

*The Stranger of Galilee* by R. E. O. White. Published by Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$3.50.

This is, in my opinion, a beautifully and spiritually written "life of Christ." It speaks of Jesus' preparation for the ministry, of its beginnings, of His miracles and teaching, of His being rejected, of His final suffering and death on the cross, of His resurrection and exaltation and in the last chapter of Jesus as the Master of men, as the Son of God, as the Lord of life; of the Spirit given to and dwelling in the Church and, finally, of His coming again on the clouds of heaven.

The style and language of the book is quite in harmony with its richly spiritual contents.

I could wish that what the author writes on p. 15 were a slip of the pen; it is this: "God had done much to make straight his way, but the doors of the human heart only human hands can open." If this were true no one would be saved. This should be: no human hands but only God can open the doors of the heart of man. H.H.

*The Theology of Karl Barth*, by G. C. Berkhouwer. Published by Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price (paperback) \$2.45.

This book is translated from the Dutch by Harry R. Boer who, by the way, made an excellent job of it. The complete title is: *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*. It was first published in the Dutch in 1956. From this viewpoint the book is somewhat premature for since that time I have received more volumes of Barth's Dogmatics.

Nevertheless, if anyone is interested in studying the theology of Karl Barth (I mean any theologian, not the general public) he cannot afford to miss reading this book of Berkhouwer. It will serve as an excellent introduction to the study of Karl Barth. It is by no means easy to become acquainted with this theology. Barth is, to my mind, a very dark writer. To me he leaves the impression, not so much that he is intentionally dark and ambiguous, but rather that the concepts which he attempts to develop are not clear before his own mind. As an illustration I may point to his view of the chaos mentioned in Gen. 1:2. I quote from Berkhouwer's book p. 58:

"Here we read of the 'tohu wabohu' (without form and void) and of the antithesis between light and darkness. Barth rejects the interpretation that Gen. 1:2 teaches a state of chaos which preceded the act of creation, as also the view



that it teaches the existence of an as yet unformed material mass which God fashioned into a harmonious cosmos. He believes a third interpretation is possible, namely that the *tohu wabohu* speaks of the earth as chaos and darkness, abyss, utter darkness, nothingness, vanity, 'a situation without hope.' The darkness which was on the face of the deep means *danger*. This does not imply a dualistic cosmogeny, but points precisely to the *victory* of God, to the *triumphant Yes* which becomes evident in this, that God *overcomes* the danger that threatens His creation."

And further:

"Gen. 1:2 does not speak of a world which God created, but precisely of a world which God did *not* create and which, in fact, he passes by in disdain."

And again:

"In the act of creation God excluded this other, this dark possibility. This does not mean, however, that this other, this rejected world does not have reality. Also this rejected possibility is *reality*. Also *this* world, albeit 'in its own absurd manner,' *has reality*. It was in its reality—though rejected—active as a shadow which also lay on the world which God willed and created." . . .

I ask the question: does Barth clearly understand his own language? Or is he intentionally vague and ambiguous?

The same is true of Barth's conception of election and reprobation which also Berkhouwer criticizes, p. 111 ff. According to Barth, Christ is *the* reprobate or rather He took all reprobation upon Himself and through His death took all reprobation away forever. On the other hand Barth denies universalism or the *apokatastasis pantoön*. Here, it seems to me, he uses terms that have always been understood by the church and in the history of dogma in a certain definite way and attaches an entirely different meaning to them. But again I ask: does Barth understand his own terms?

But let this be enough.

I wish to repeat that one that wishes to study the theology of Karl Barth cannot afford to ignore this book of Berkhouwer. It is true that his criticism of Barth is very mild, but this may be even a good feature of the book.

In a closing chapter Berkhouwer offers a rather severe criticism of Van Til's views on Barth's Theology. H.H.

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Society wishes to express its sympathy with our fellow members, Mrs. Gerrit Lubbers, Mrs. John Lubbers, and Mrs. Rhine Lubbers, who suddenly lost their Father,

BERNARD LUBBERS

May God in His great mercy remember them and the bereaved family in this grievous loss. May we all remember that there is but one step between us and death!

The Hudsonville Ladies' Society  
Rev. Gerrit Vos, President  
Mrs. Bert Maring, Secretary

## OUR DOCTRINE

### THE BOOK OF REVELATION

#### PART TWO

#### CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

#### *The Fall of Babylon*

#### Revelation 18 (See your Bible)

There is no cry of the suffering. There is no groan of the poor. There is no complaint of the wronged. There is the gathering of all the blessings of science and art and industry. There is equality and justice and brotherhood. There is found the climax of man's attainment, the realization of the number *Six hundred sixty-six*. But there is also found the very height of iniquity and godlessness. Of her we read that her sins have reached to heaven, and they have risen mountain-high, so that she deceived all the nations of the earth with her sorceries, and that the blood of prophets and saints and of all that have been slain upon the earth is flowing through her streets. Her antitype, therefore, is Sodom and Gomorrah, the wicked center of godlessness and luxury of old. Also there was luxury and splendor and riches and no want. But also there the voice of their iniquity cried to Jehovah Sabaoth, so that He remembered their sins. In the pride of her wantonness and the rottenness of her luxurious living she blasphemes the name of Jehovah. She arose in wanton rebellion against the Almighty, fought against the Lamb and against His saints, and proudly manifests the emblem of the image of the beast. She is also world-controlling in her wicked luxury and godlessness.

As to the fall of this great, metropolitan city, we may remark, in the first place, that the manner of it is not definitely described in the chapter. In the first place, we may notice that this is generally the case when pictures concerning the end are held before us in the Word of God. We usually are not told in detail just exactly how the end shall be. We are informed that Christ shall come, and that He shall come with the clouds; but we are not told the details of that coming. We must be content with the facts. We are told that God's people shall be delivered and that they shall have no part with the very final judgment of the world; but exactly how this shall take place is hidden behind the veil of symbolism. We must be satisfied with the facts. The New Jerusalem is to come down from heaven and shall have dominion over the new heaven and the new earth; but also this greatest of all events is clothed with the garb of highest symbolism, and the manner how is left in the dark. The same is true of Babylon. We are told that she shall come to her final destruction. As we have remarked in a former connec-

tion, we are also told in general outlines that the devil shall be the cause of his own destruction — a fact which is repeatedly become plain in history and which lies in the nature of the case. He shall rouse the nations against his own kingdom, not indeed for that purpose, but to war against Jehovah. But in the meantime he shall fulfill God's own counsel, and he shall work for his own destruction. But exactly how the devil shall do this we are not informed. Most natural it is, indeed, to assume that the satanic influence of Antichrist in the world of nations that live at the four corners of the earth shall ultimately have the result that they rise in enmity against the world of Christendom, which is really the anti-Christendom of the beast; and, thinking that they shall strike at the Lamb and His people, they shall destroy the beast. For that same reason I would take the address in verses 6 and 7 as meant not for God's people, but rather for the nations that must execute God's wrath upon Babylon. Outwardly it would seem to contradict this statement. For we read: "Reward her even as she rewarded you," which evidently would be addressed to the people of God. But in the original this impression is not given. We simply read: "Render unto her even as she is rendered, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled mingle unto her double. How much soever she glorified herself and waxed wanton, so much give unto her of torment and mourning." It is true, the nations that execute this wrath of God upon Babylon will have an entirely different purpose in mind. Their purpose will undoubtedly be to strike at the power of the Lamb and His people. And this very purpose becomes their sin and their guilt. But the fact remains that through this God may execute His own will and counsel, even as through the pride and self-exaltation of Jehu, for which he was afterward rebuked and punished, God sent His punishment upon the house of Ahab. However this may be, Babylon shall fall. That is the certainty of our text and of our chapter. And this is pictured twice. In the first place, it is announced by the strong and powerful angel with great authority who comes down from heaven and shouts, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great." The certainty of her fall is indicated in the perfect tense. The angel speaks as if the city is fallen already, even though evidently that fall is still anticipated, to indicate that her doom is certain. And again, the certainty of her doom is also expressed in the repetition of the word "fallen." Babylon shall surely fall. The certainty of that fall is so great, and the fall is so imminent, that it is as though it had already taken place. And, in the second place, we are told of this fall of Babylon symbolically in the picture of the angel that comes down from heaven and, taking up a great millstone, casts it into the sea, explaining, "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." And therefore we receive the information that the fall of Babylon is certain, as well as that it shall be sudden and complete and that it shall be found no more at all.

The last consideration leads us to the second thought on

the fall of Babylon, namely, that it shall evidently be complete and final. It shall be the last of Babylon and her anti-christian power. She shall never be rebuilt. Her utter desolation is directly pictured in the words of the mighty angel, vs. 2: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." So the prophet Isaiah had pictured the fall of Babylon before, a fall which was particularly fulfilled in the destruction of literal Babylon, but which shall reach its complete realization in the fall of the great anti-christian power: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged." Isaiah 13:19-22. The same is indicated in verse 8 of our chapter, where we read: "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." And lastly, this is pictured once again in verses 22 and 23 of our chapter, where the angel announces her future condition: "And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee." In a word, it is a picture of utter desolation that is drawn before our eyes. Instead of the splendor of her appearance, she now shows the appearance of a hole of demons and evil spirits and wild and unclean beasts. Instead of the joyful light and illumination of her festive streets, there is now absolute darkness: for even the light of a candle shall shine no more. Instead of the bustle of machinery, the joyful sound of music, the glad voice of bride and bridegroom, there is now a doleful and gloomy silence. Babylon is turned into a region of death and destruction. All her glory is gone in one hour, and that forever. It is the final and complete judgment upon Babylon. She has committed fornication with the kings and princes of the world. She has made the nations drunk with the wine of her fornication. She has deceived them all with her sorceries. In her was found the blood of all the saints and prophets. She has made war with the Lamb throughout the ages. Her iniquity rises to heaven. Therefore, in one hour is her final and complete destruction come. God judges her rightly: according to what she has done she is rewarded.

H.H.



## A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

### Moses and "I Am"

*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

*. . . This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* Exodus 3: 14, 15

I AM THAT I AM, this is a most profound and glorious name.

It is to this name that the heart of every man aspires. No desire is more dear to man than to be able to say, "I am that which I have determined myself to be." Was not this the dream that filled the heart of Eve when she rejected the word of God for the promise of the devil, "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"? It is a deep-set urge, to be self-sufficient, to be self-determining, self-providing, and, could it be, self-existent. But, in spite of all this longing and even trying, it can not be. Man is what he is made to be, by his heredity and by his environment, by the constant flow of influences which press in upon his life, by his friends and foes, by riches and poverty, by prosperity and adversity, by wars and peace. Pride tells man he should be self-made. Reality is that countless determining factors mold him from without. If he is honest, man must say, "I am what God has determined that I should be."

He before whom Moses stood said, "I AM THAT I AM," and He said it in truth. He was Jehovah God, and He is the same even now. He is the source of His own being, His own life, His own existence. There is nothing that forms or molds or influences Him from without. He has determined what He shall be, and even so He is. There is none over Him; there is none next to Him; there is no one to whom He must adapt. Nothing can change Him; nothing can degrade Him or raise Him up; nothing can make Him be different. This is even more wonderful when we consider that within His being there is a counsel concerning all things that take place in time. He does not exist alone, in isolation from all of the vicissitudes of time. His being stands in immediate contact with them all. But still He remains the "I AM THAT I AM." He influences all the circumstances of time; but Himself is influenced by none. He determines all things; but Himself is determined by none. He sustains all things; but Himself is sustained by none. He creates all things; but Himself is created by none. He is the greatest of all, the only "I AM THAT I AM"; He is Jehovah God.

"The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" spoke unto Moses applying unto Himself that name. This made His presence so eminently important. The same Who called Himself I AM identified Himself as the God of the covenant. He

had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the promises: that He would be a God unto them, that He would bless them, that He would give to them the land of Canaan and to their seed forever. His very name implied faithfulness to these promises. He would not change; no one could force Him to change; He was able to bring it to pass. Israel would be saved from the bondage of Egypt unto the land of covenant promise. This would be His memorial unto all generations, God's people would surely be saved.

In the presence of God Moses trembled and quaked. He was so very small. For forty years in the wilderness he had been pondering this fact. He had learned to recognize and acknowledge the folly of his youth when he had thought to do something for God. He had learned the wickedness of his impatience when he had not waited for a calling and an authoritative name in which he could act. He had learned to know his sin. Through the years of wandering in the wilderness he had become ever smaller in his own esteem. But now he stood in the presence of God and he was not yet small enough. Quickly he shed his shoes, but the dust and sin of the ways he had trod still seemed to cleave to his feet. He covered his face for shame, but still the uncleanness of his face and lips seemed openly exposed. He was afraid, and at the sound of that voice he trembled. He was so very small, and he stood in the presence of God.

Then God spoke, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . . Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Moses heard these words with amazement. At this moment he felt his own nothingness as never before, and at the same moment God was telling him that he must go to deliver Israel from Egypt. This was to his mind impossible. Forty years before he would have welcomed the opportunity; but not now. He had learned to know himself too well. He was not the man to do a work like that. "Who am I," he answered back, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

God spoke again "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." Moses need not fear his own inability. God would be with him. That he was nothing in himself did not matter. God would be there to supply all that he lacked. God would even give to him a token of his calling, a promise that they would come to worship at the very mountain where he now stood.

But Moses was not afraid just of himself. He feared the people. What would they say? Would they receive him as a leader? He remembered so well those taunting jeers from the past, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" How could he possibly make them understand? How could he convince them that this time it was different? What would be the proof of his authority? To Moses it appeared to be

hopeless, and he feared even to try. He dared not return to those who had rejected him before. "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?"

It was then that God answered, "I AM THAT I AM: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." With that name Moses could go forth in boldness to speak to anyone, it mattered not who. He could speak to the people of Israel; he could speak to the elders of Israel; he could speak to Pharaoh himself. That which he would announce in the name of the I AM did not depend upon their response. Moses need not go trying to convince or persuade those to whom he spoke as though the desire of God depended upon them. He is self-determining and able to perform His own will. This was of utmost importance for Moses to understand. Because he was going in the name of I AM, he need have no fear for what the outcome would be. He could be confident that, regardless of what men might do, God's purpose and promise would be realized. God told him beforehand what he should say to Pharaoh: "Say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." Even more, God warned him beforehand that, although that command of Pharaoh would be minimal, Pharaoh would not listen. "And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand." But this mattered not; God would tell Moses beforehand what the end result would be. "And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptian: and it shall come to pass that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty." God's will would surely be performed.

Still Moses hesitated. He feared the people, for he knew how obstinate they could be. Mere words would not be enough for them even though they were the people of God. "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee."

"And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand." The rod had served to identify Moses as a shepherd in the land of Midian. Henceforth it would serve to identify him as the shepherd of God's chosen people. Through that rod marvelous works would be performed. The power of Moses' calling would be made clearly manifest. Even now as he cast the rod to the ground it was changed into a serpent. Moses knew the significance of a serpent. As a child upon his parents' knee he had been told of the use to which the serpent had been subjected in the garden of Eden. He remembered the word of God to the serpent as it had been

passed down for many generations, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." The serpent was a symbol of Satan and his wicked power. In revulsion and fear Moses drew back. But according to the command of God he reached forth his hand to grasp the serpent by the tail, and it was transformed to a rod again. It meant that Moses' rod would have complete control over the power of Satan to release it and control it according to the power of God.

Again God spoke unto him. "Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow." This reflected upon Moses himself. Leprosy is a horrible disease with which the body very literally rots away. In the old dispensation this disease was considered a symbol of the corruption of sin. Of those who had this disease it could be seen that their bodies were literally dying, even as sin is always killing the soul. Now suddenly Moses found himself to have contracted that terrible disease. It was as though all at once the sin which he knew was within him had come to the surface. To Moses it was as though he was being exposed and condemned before the justice of God. But again God spoke, "Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh." Here again was the power of the I AM symbolically presented, a power able even to wash away the corruption of sin.

Still there was more. God continued to speak. "And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land." This was to be the first of the ten great plagues that would come in judgment upon Egypt. Each in its own way would demonstrate the power of the I AM whose will none can resist.

Moses did not want to go back to Egypt. He was afraid, afraid of Pharaoh, afraid of the children of Israel, afraid of himself. Almost as a move of desperation he presented one more excuse. "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." Through the years of lonely wandering in the desert his tongue had grown thick, his words were slow and halting. But what was this before the Lord. "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?" In fact when Moses continued to object, the Lord told him with a tone of anger that preparations already had been made. "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth:

*(Continued on page 180)*

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of Matthew 18:15-20

a.

The well-known passage from Matthew 18 which we will now consider is not always understood; it often is referred to merely as a formal, mechanical rule and norm for dealing with an offending brother without understanding its spiritual import; that it is a fundamental order in God's church who must exercise the *keys* of the Kingdom of heaven. That it is a good and proper way is then understood. But that only she is the church who walks in this way is then not fully grasped; where this way of the Key-power that leads either to heaven or to hell clearly and unequivocally confessed.

Only the church that insists that its members walk in this way has the right to call itself church. Be it then two or three who gathered in Christ's Name, there is Christ in their midst; here Christ stands in the midst of the candlesticks. All other methods of bringing men to repentance soon reveal themselves to be shot through with worldly diplomacy, leaving the church guilty of the blood of those who perished in their sins. Thus we read in Ezekiel 3:18-21: "Son of man, I made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them *warning* from me. When I say unto the wicked thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to *save* his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die; because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."

Such was the burden of Ezekiel in his day in Israel.

And such is also the burden upon each one, who has a brother sin against him, in the New Testament church in the world.

For, let it be clearly understood at the outset of this essay, that it is not simply left to our discretion, whether we desire to "gain the brother" who has either sinned in general, or more particularly against us, but such is the precept of the Lord to us; such is our high and holy calling to every one who has *sinned* against us. Let it be understood that we become guilty of the "blood" of such a one who has sinned — if we do not reprove and warn him of his sin! And if finally someone does not *heed* the warning and hardens himself in

his sin and unrepentance, then it is not up to us whether such a one shall be "considered" a heathen and a publican, but the command of Christ is, "Let him then be unto you" a heathen and publican. It has the *sanction* of God in Christ!

That this is a most tender and loving and righteous task on the part of him who would seek to restore an erring brother is clearly taught in Matthew 18. And that this is difficult, that it is really the straight and narrow way is equally obvious from the text.

Jesus begins by pointing out a definite "case." It is the most difficult case thinkable. It is the case when a brother has sinned against me. Jesus says, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee." This is objectively possible. It often happens. And thus Jesus states the matter.

It should be noticed, first of all, that the man who sins against me is my brother in Christ. Since the Scriptures are masculine it may also mean "a sister." It is at least one who confesses to believe in Christ, to be a believer in the Lord, a new creature in Christ, who daily must put off the old man and put on the new man. He must be daily sincerely sorry for his sins, that he has sinned against God, and have a true joy in God through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.

Such is the brother and sister who has sinned against us.

There is a difference in the reading of the text which should be pointed out. It is the matter of whether we should read: "If thy brother has sinned" or "if thy brother has sinned *against thee*." It is quite evident from the entire Scripture that if a brother has sinned a sin — we are to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. We are to do this irrespective of whether this was a sin against our person or not. See Gal. 6:1 where we read: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness . . ." See also James 5:19, 20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." However, the question is what does Jesus teach us here in Matthew 18? Does he merely refer to a brother who sins, or does he refer to a brother who has sinned against us, against *me*?

We believe that the reading followed in the King James Version, the Holland *Staten Vertaling* and the German translation is correct. The reading "sinned against thee" must be retained. In the first place, it seems to us, because that is the way Peter understood the expression, when he said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin *against me* (eis eme) and I forgive him?" Peter does not ask simply "how often shall my brother sin" and nothing more. In the second place, because Jesus follows through with this question, this outburst of Peter, and tells him that it must be till seventy times seven times, and illustrates the point with the beautiful and instructive parable concerning forgiveness from the heart. And, in the third place, because Jesus here really teaches what full forgiveness is. It is the acid test of real Christianity. It is

the most difficult case. If one can walk this last mile of love and forgiveness, one has come to what John calls "perfected love." Then one is perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. When one can perform this act of faith and love one can do anything to restore the brother also in sins which are not committed against his person.

The text therefore stands: If thy brother have sinned *against thee!*

Another element which we must too underscore is that we must be certain that what the brother has done was indeed *sin* on the part of the brother! This element is rather important to be remembered. It must be, objectively considered, *sin!* There is a difference between giving offence and taking offence. Besides, what the brother has done "against" us must be of such a nature that it is "sin," it must be against the law of God, and, therefore, incompatible with the end of the law, to wit, love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned. For the brother must not be attacked, but must be *saved*, he must be gained. The sin must be of such a nature, that, if not confessed he will *perish* in this sin! And, if finally this has been brought to the brother's attention and the brother is "convicted" he will needs have to be accounted a "heathen and a publican"!

Such is the "case" Jesus here presents to the disciples.

And it is intended to show who is really great in the kingdom of heaven; who is really like "this child," having a child-like faith and love, which will believe all things, hope all things and endure all things. It is a love which is vitalized by the thought that it is not the will of the Father that one of these shall perish, and that I have a calling toward the brother lest I be guilty of his blood when he perishes.

Now in such a case there is one manner of procedure which has the sanction of Christ, and only one!

If I am to gain this brother I am to "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." The term "tell him his fault" really should read "go and *convict* him between thee and him alone." There must be a *conviction* of sin! It must not simply be brought to his attention that he has sinned in your opinion, but it must be shown to him that what he did toward you was *indeed sin!* He must be convicted that he is guilty. It must be bound upon his sanctified conscience. He must be overcome by the "argument," by the statement of the facts, and that too, in such a way, that should he not give heed in his own mind and conscience, he is convicted of sin by the Holy Ghost. Unless that is done — one is still guilty of such a man's *sin*.

And this must be done by us all alone. It must be most absolutely alone. Only the Lord may be present. And this means that not only the visit must be alone, but it must not have become the common knowledge of everyone else, if the sin is not public. And that has a good discipline in it. It is the discipline that calls for love. And, if one does not desire to go to his offending brother, one does not desire to save him from sin at all. He hates the brother even though he would like to make himself believe that his not going to

see the brother who has *sinned* against him is love. It may be a long walk to see the offending brother. Particularly when the flesh enters in. However, where love impels us that way is very short; the commandment to see the brother is not grievous.

We will then be very eager to see the brother.

It may be that we need to pray much before we go to see the brother; we will then understand the love of the shepherd who goes to find the sheep that was lost. Maybe an "eye must be pulled out" and a "hand cut off." It is possible that, when we must go *all alone* that we will once more examine the facts, humble ourselves, remember the time(s) that we ourselves were guilty of the same sin, and go to the brother in the "spirit of meekness." We will first pull the beam out of our own eye. However, then if we are fully certain that the brother has "sinned" and that if he does not confess it he will perish in his impenitence; that unless he is told by us we will be guilty of his blood, then we can go in a good conscience in the hope of winning a brother.

Nay, not simply win a brother to ourselves, but win him first of all for the Lord, His kingdom, the church, and for his own good and free conscience to fight against sin and the devil!

He that thus is the means for the conversion of a sinner (brother) from the error of his way has saved a soul from death and has covered a multitude of sins.

Now there is a possibility that the brother is not "gained." He does not at all show signs of true repentance.

Although he is "convicted" he will not confess that he is sincerely sorry; he will not ask for forgiveness, but continues to walk in this "sin." Then of course the first step is really there already for his ultimate "excommunication," that is, that he be considered by the entire church, before the face of God, as a heathen and a publican. For when "sin" is involved, actual sin, then it is a matter of life and death.

Then the church is brought in.

For the word must be established. And this must be thus not simply before men, but before God. For the word of two or three witnesses shall stand.

More of this next time, D.V.

G.L.

## A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

(Continued from page 178)

and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs."

Moses himself was the first to learn that it was impossible to resist the I AM. "And Moses went . . ."

B.W.

# IN HIS FEAR

## Children of Our Age

(4)

Sad to say that is so very, very true.

As far as our flesh is concerned, as far as that which we have from our earthly parents is concerned, we are children of the wicked age in which we live. We are surrounded by those who live according to the evil spirit of that age. But we also belong to that wicked world and are part and parcel of it. When it develops in sin, we develop in sin with that world. When it branches out into a new series of sins and after a new pattern of evil, we go along as much as we dare. And in our hearts we go all the way with the world in its devilishness. Sin is not something strange to us. Walking in obedience before God is strange unto us.

It is nothing wherein to boast to say that we are children of our age. It is not to our credit that all this must be said of us. Shame should cover our faces, and with the Apostle Paul we ought to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Let it be that way.

O, perish even the thought that we should say by word or by deed, "So what?" May it be far from us that we assume a careless attitude about all this and speak of it in a fatalistic way. That is not the idea at all behind these lines that have been written under the heading *Children of Our Age* these last two months. Indeed, we tried in many ways to show that we are even as the world and that we find also in ourselves that devilishness whereby we try to defend all this wickedness in which we walk. But our purpose was not to try to salve the conscience and to whittle down the law whereby we must walk. We have no desire to try to excuse all the evil that still cleaves to us in this life. Such action does not belong under the title *In His Fear* but rather under the words: In Hatred of Him.

What shall we then say to all these things?

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Surely it is not that now you and I should not expect much else and should be far slower in applying the rod of discipline to our children or the keys of the kingdom to the members of His Church.

We are children of our age.

By God's grace however we can and do say more.

In the wonder of God's grace we are also children of the everlasting age. We have been born from above as well as from below. We have a carnal and temporal life in us, but we also have a spiritual and everlasting life. (We prefer to say it that way, even though our English translation speaks of eternal life. Only God has eternal life. And by that we mean not simply everlasting but without beginning as well as without end. Our life lasts forever and is therefore rightly

called everlasting life. But there is a beginning to it. You cannot come to the end of the measurement into the future, but you can find the beginning from which you would try to measure. But God's life cannot be measured on either end, for the simple reason that it has no end and has no beginning.)

And because we have that everlasting life which comes to us from out of heaven, we can and we do perform other deeds than those of the flesh. We fight against that flesh. We oppose ourselves as children of our age and seek to walk with all our members as children of the everlasting age.

That everlasting age is the age when the New Jerusalem shall be established on the new earth with which the new heaven shall be united. Then only righteousness and love shall dwell on that earth. The evil doers will all have been cast into the lake of fire, and God's people shall fill the earth. Only obedience will be seen on that earth. The love of God shall characterize all that transpires there. No word shall be uttered, no thought shall arise, no desire shall come into our hearts but that which is wholly to the glory of God.

Of that age we are children by virtue of our rebirth. John says of this in I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God." That is what it means to be children of the everlasting age. It means that we are children of God, children who are, as Peter says in his second epistle, partakers of the divine nature. II Peter 1:4. No, we do not become divine. We are not partakers of the divine essence. But we are partakers of the virtues of the divine nature. Such we were in the beginning. We shone with God's righteousness, with His holiness, with His knowledge and wisdom. We lost it and for that reason became children of our age. Our minds became filled with the lie and foolishness. We were unrighteous and unholy, workers of evil, enemies of the living God. Thus the greater percentage of the human race is today. And for that reason the antichrist will soon arise and bring sin to its climax. All the evil that is in man will come out. And that man hates God will become abundantly clear to all. But in a comparatively few God plants the life which is from above, the life of Christ so that these again shine with God's righteousness, holiness, wisdom and knowledge. These are the children of the everlasting age.

These children do not approve of all that evil which we perform because of our old nature. These children do not laugh at sin. O, the flesh does that. And your and my flesh does that. We can sometimes laugh quite heartily about sins of our youth, about the evil tricks we played, the bold deeds of sin which we committed. We find joy in relating these deeds of wickedness which we committed in the days of our childhood. But that new principle of life that makes us to be children of the everlasting age does not join in that merriment and carnal mirth. We read the testimony of one of those children of the everlasting age in Psalm 119, when in verse 136, he says, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,

because they keep not Thy law." Children of the everlasting age weep about sin. They do not rejoice in it. Children of the everlasting age find delight only in the ethical perfection which will fill the earth when that age dawns upon the new creation.

And you that read these lines, is that also your experience? In the one child of God it is more pronounced than in the other. The one feels it more keenly than the other. The one weeps more often about the evil that surrounds him and is in him. But every regenerated child of God has this hatred of sin and delight in the glory of God to one degree or another. If we do not find it in ourselves, we can only say that we are children of our age and therefore children of wrath. But when we find this hatred of sin and this love of God in us, we know that we are children of the everlasting age and that we shall enter into a kingdom where this love of God will be perfected.

In the providence and grace of God there is one thing that serves to uphold this child of God in the midst of the world that develops in sin. God causes His Church to develop in the truth. Parallel to this development of sin there is the steady growth of the Church in the doctrine and truth of God's Word. In fact God uses that very world in its development in sin to serve the growth of the Church in the truth. The world persecutes, and the world as it appears in the form of the false church comes with increasingly subtle forms of the lie. The Church is kept alert, and the Church in the grace of God searches the Word more carefully and studies it more thoroughly to combat these new forms of the lie. As a result the Church is led deeper and deeper into the truths of that Word of God.

Such is the clear testimony of history. It is the controversy, it is the heresy that lifts its proud head that God uses to cause His Church to search more deeply and thoroughly. And rather than to deplore the fact that heresies lift their proud heads, we ought to appreciate the fact that through these the Church has come to a richer understanding of the truth exactly because God led His Church in connection with these errors to see some new facet of the truth. The Roman Catholic Church became exceedingly corrupt before to the eyes of men it became plain that this was not the church of God and that the truth of that Word of God was no longer heard. Luther himself tried all the prescribed works to attain to the peace of justification only to find that he found no peace for his soul in this way. But he turned to the Word of God and the truth of justification by faith and not by works came to the fore as the Church had not enjoyed it before. And the same thing is true of all the reformations on smaller scale that have occurred since that time. The Church of today is richer in the truth as the Spirit continues to lead her more and more deeply into its beauty as we approach the days of the antichrist.

The church that does not develop in the truth, the church that does not build on the shoulders of the church in the

past, the church that disregards the truth as it was delivered to the Church in the past, will find increasingly that it defends the walk of the children of this age. It begins to see less and less evil in the world. It begins to speak of the good that the evil world is yet able to do. It fails to discipline those who walk as the children of the age and only feebly speaks of the beauty and glory of being children of the everlasting age. Woe unto the church that does not fight the good fight of faith! Woe unto the church that seeks unity for the sake of unity and for the sake of numbers and carnal boasting! Pretty soon you will find in it only the children of this age, and the children of the everlasting age will find it necessary to heed the call of Christ to come out in order that they may have the joy of having Him come in and sup with them.

What shall we say to all these things?

First of all this: Surely it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God Who showeth mercy. As children of this age we will sin and run in the way of sin. No salvation for us then. But in the mercy of God we become children of the everlasting age. We will say then with Jonah: "Salvation is of the Lord," Jonah 2:9.

Further we will say this: Let us flee to the cross with all these sins we commit as children of our age. And let us as children of the everlasting age flee to God in prayer, beseeching Him in His mercy to strengthen us so that we may more and more live as such children, not being conformed to the world but being transformed to show forth His glory in the darkness of this night of sin.

J.A.H.

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#### IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church wishes herewith to express condolences to their fellow members, Mr. Rhine Lubbers and Mr. Bernard J. Lubbers, in the death of their Father and Grandfather,

#### BERNARD LUBBERS

who died very suddenly in a train-car accident. But we believe that God called him to heaven, and so we wish God's consolation on the above brethren, as also to the whole bereaved family.

Rev. Gerrit Vos, President  
Mr. Harry Zwak, Clerk

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Board of the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mr. Gerrit Lubbers, in the death of his father,

#### MR. BERNARD LUBBERS

whom the Lord took so suddenly.

May our heavenly Father, Who does all things perfectly, comfort him and his family by His Word and Spirit and give them peace.

Richard Bloem, Secretary of the Board



## Contending For The Faith

### The Church and the Sacraments

#### THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

#### VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

#### FORMAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

He objected to the Epistle to the Hebrews because it seems to deny (in chs. 6, 10, and 12) the possibility of repentance after baptism, contrary to the Gospels and to Paul, and betrays in ch. 2:3, a post-apostolic origin. He ascribed the authorship to Apollos by an ingenious guess, which, though not supported by ancient tradition, has found great favor with modern commentators and critics, chiefly because the authorship of any other possible writer (Paul, Barnabas, Luke, Clement) seems to offer insuperable difficulties, while the description of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28, compared with the allusions in I Cor. 1:12; 3:6; 4:6; 16:12, seems to fit exactly the author of this anonymous Epistle.

He called the Epistle of Jude an "unnecessary epistle," a mere extract from Second Peter and post-apostolic, filled with apocryphal matter, and hence rejected by the ancient fathers.

He could at first find no sense in the mysteries of the Apocalypse and declared it to be "neither apostolic nor prophetic," because it deals only with images and visions, and yet, notwithstanding its obscurity, it adds threats and promises, "though nobody knows what it means"; but afterwards he modified his judgment when the Lutheran divines found in it welcome weapons against the church of Rome.

The clearest utterance on this subject is found at the close of his preface to the first edition of his German version of the New Testament (1522), but it was suppressed in later editions.

Luther's view of inspiration was both strong and free. With the profoundest conviction of the divine contents of the Bible, he distinguished between the revealed truth itself and the human wording and reasoning of the writers. He says of one of the rabbinical arguments of his favorite apostle: "My dear brother Paul, this argument won't stick."

Luther was, however, fully aware of the subjective and conjectural character of these opinions, and had no intention of obtruding them on the church: hence he modified his prefaces in later editions. He judged the Scriptures from an exclusively dogmatic, and one-sidedly Pauline standpoint, and did not consider their gradual historical growth.

A few Lutheran divines followed him in assigning a subordinate position to the seven Antilegomena of the New Testament; but the Lutheran church, with a sound instinct, accepted for popular use the traditional catholic canon (not even expressly excluding the Jewish Apocrypha), yet re-

tained his arrangement of the books of the New Testament. The Rationalists, of course, revived, intensified, and carried to excess the bold opinion of Luther, but in a spirit against which he would himself raise the strongest protest.

The Reformed divines were more conservative than Luther in accepting the canonical books, but more decided in rejecting the Apocrypha of the Old Testament. The Reformed Confessions usually enumerate the canonical books.

Zwingli objected only to the Apocalypse and made no doctrinal use of it, because he did not deem it an inspired book, written by the same John who wrote the fourth Gospel. In this view he has many followers, but the severest critical school of our days (that of Tubingen) assigns it to the Apostle John. Wolfgang Musculus mentions the seven Antilegomena, but includes them in the general catalogue of the New Testament; and Oecolampadius speaks of six Antilegomena (omitting the Hebrews), as holding an inferior rank, but nevertheless appeals to their testimony.

Calvin had no fault to find with James and Jude, and often quotes Hebrews and Revelation as canonical books, though he wrote no commentary on Revelation, probably because he felt himself incompetent for the task. He is silent about Second and Third John. He denies, decidedly, the Pauline authorship, but not the canonicity, of Hebrews. He is disposed to assign Second Peter to a pupil of Peter, who wrote under the auspices and by direction of the Apostle; but he guards in this case, also, against unfavorable inferences from the uncertainty of origin.

Calvin clearly saw the inconsistency of giving the Church the right of determining the canon after denying her right of making an article of faith. He therefore placed the canon on the authority of God who bears testimony to it through the voice of the Spirit in the hearts of the believer. The eternal and inviolable truth of God, he says, is not founded on the pleasure and judgment of men, and can be as easily distinguished as light from darkness, and white from black. In the same line, Peter Vermilius denies that "the Scriptures take their authority from the Church. Their certitude is derived from God. The Word is older than the Church. The Spirit of God wrought in the hearts of the hearers and readers of the Word so that they recognized it to be truly divine." This view is clearly set forth in several Calvinistic Confessions, such as the Second Helvetic Confession, the Belgic Confession, the Gallican Confession, and the Westminster Confession. In its exclusive form it is diametrically opposed to the maxim of Augustine, otherwise so highly esteemed by the Reformers: "I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Church."

But the two kinds of evidence supplement each other. The human authority of tradition, though not the final ground of belief, is indispensable as an historical witness of the genuineness and canonicity, and is of great weight in conflict with Rationalism. There is no essential antagonism between the Bible and the Church in the proper sense of the term. They are inseparable. The Church was founded by Christ and the

apostles through the preaching of the *living* Word of God, and the founders of the Church are also the authors of the *written* Word, which continues to be the shining and guiding light of the Church; while the Church in turn is the guardian, preserver, translator, propagator, and expounder of the Bible.

3. The liberal views of the Reformers on inspiration and the canon were abandoned after the middle of the sixteenth century, and were succeeded by compact and consolidated systems of theology. The evangelical scholasticism of the seventeenth century strongly resembles, both in its virtues and defects, the catholic scholasticism of the Middle Ages which systematized and contracted the patristic theology, except that the former was based on the Bible, the latter on church tradition. In the conflict with Romanism the Lutheran and Calvinistic scholastics elaborated a stiff, mechanical theory of inspiration in order to set an infallible book against an infallible pope. The Bible was identified with the Word of God, dictated to the sacred writers as the penmen of the Holy Ghost. Even the classical purity of style and the integrity of the traditional text, including the Massoretic punctuation, were asserted in the face of stubborn facts, which came to light as the study of the origin and history of the text advanced. The divine side of the Scriptures was exclusively dwelled upon, and the human and literary side was ignored or virtually denied. Hence, the exegetical poverty of the period of Protestant scholasticism. The Bible was used as a repository of proof texts for previously conceived dogmas, without regard to the context, the difference between the Old and New Testaments, and the gradual development of the divine revelation in accordance with the needs and capacities of men.

4. It was against this Protestant bibliolatry and symbololatry that Rationalism arose as a legitimate protest. It pulled down one dogma after another, and subjected the Bible and the canon to a searching criticism. It denies the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, except in a wider sense which applies to all works of genius, and treats them simply as a gradual evolution of the religious spirit of Israel and the primitive Christian Church. It charges them with errors of fact and errors of doctrine, and resolves the miracles into legends and myths. It questions the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch, the genuineness of the Davidic Psalms, the Solomonian writings, the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah and Daniel, and other books of the Old Testament. It assigns not only the Eusebian Antilegomena, but even the Gospels, Acts, the Catholic Epistles and several Pauline Epistles to the post-apostolic age, from A.D. 70 to 150.

In its later developments, however, Rationalism has been obliged to retreat and make several concessions to orthodoxy. The canonical Gospels and Acts have gained by further investigation and discovery; and the apostolic authorship of the four great Epistles of Paul to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians and the Apocalypse of John is fully admitted by the severest school of criticism (that of Tubingen). A most important admission: for these five books teach or imply

all the leading facts and truths of the gospel, and overthrow the very foundations of Rationalism. With the Christ of the Gospels, and the Apostle Paul of his acknowledged Epistles, Christianity is safe.

Rationalism was a radical revolution which swept like a flood over the continent of Europe. But it is not negative and destructive only. It has made and is still making valuable contributions to biblical philology, textual criticism, and grammatico-historical exegesis. It enlarges the knowledge of the conditions and environments of the Bible, and of all that belongs to the human and temporal side of Christ and Christianity. It cultivates with special zeal and learning the sciences of Critical Introduction, Biblical Theology, the Life of Christ, the Apostolic and post-Apostolic Ages.

5. These acquisitions to exegetical and historical theology are a permanent gain, and are incorporated in the new evangelical theology, which arose in conflict with Rationalism and in defense of the positive Christian faith in the divine facts of revelation and the doctrines of salvation. The conflict is still going on with increasing strength, but with the sure prospect of the triumph of the truth. Christianity is independent of all critical questions on the canon, and of human theories of inspiration; else Christ would himself have written the Gospels, or commanded the Apostles to do so, and provided for the miraculous preservation and inspired translation of the text. His "words are spirit, and are life." "The flesh profiteth nothing." Criticism and speculation may for a while wander away from Christ, but will ultimately return to Him who furnishes the only key for the solution of the problems of history and human life. "No matter," says the world-poet Goethe in one of his last utterances, "how much the human mind may progress in intellectual culture, in the science of nature, in ever-expanding breadth and depth: it will never be able to rise above the elevation and moral culture which shines in the Gospels." — end of quote from Philip Schaff on his "The Reformation and Rationalism" as written by him in Volume VII, pages 26-42. We will continue, the Lord willing, with this subject of Rationalism in our following article.

H.V.

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Priscilla Ladies' Society of the Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. E. Rutgers, in the passing away of her father, and to Mrs. H. Rutgers, Mrs. J. Regnerus, Mrs. G. Vroom, Mrs. M. De Vries and Mrs. W. Buiter, in the departure from this life of their grandfather,

#### MR. WILLIAM VEGTER

who, at the age of 91 years, entered his final rest on January 5, 1961.

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it" (Is. 25:8).

Oak Lawn Ladies' Society  
Mrs. E. Medema, Secretary

## SHOULD OUR ADOLESCENTS BE ENCOURAGED TO PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER?

(4)

We are still occupied with the question whether our adolescents should be encouraged to make early confession of faith (at the age of 12 to 15) and thus partake of the Lord's Supper. And, having mentioned some of the arguments advanced in favor of this idea, we shall now try to formulate a conclusion and produce reasons for it.

And then, by way of introduction, I want to state that my answer to this second question would not be a flat *No*, but a qualified *No*. My reasons for this will become more clear in the third section of this discussion. But I want to emphasize, first of all, that I do not believe that a definitely fixed and precise age can be established for the making of confession of faith. Hence, while I believe as a general rule that early adolescence is not the time for confession of faith, I would not exclude the possibility that occasionally a youth of 12 to 15 years old is spiritually and psychologically ready to confess his faith. And, in the second place, while you may, in general, follow the rule that confession of faith should be made by the time one reaches adulthood, nevertheless within that limitation the making of confession of faith is an individual matter. And not only do you run the risk by attempting to legislate an exact age when confession of faith must be made of de-emphasizing the spiritual character of such confession, but, to my mind, there are many more detrimental aspects to such legislation which would outweigh whatever demerits our present practice may have.

We may also observe by way of introduction that there has never been unanimity of opinion on this subject among Reformed authorities. Dr. A. Kuyper probably comes nearest to the view suggested under "II." He proposes the age of 16 as the proper time for confession of faith. In "Onze Eeredienst," page 436, after a lengthy discussion of the transition from baptism to communion, he presents what to my mind is a faulty argument, writing as follows (I translate): "It is therefore so much better to connect the making of confession more nearly and more closely to baptism, and to put it at the close of the age of childhood and before the rise of intellectual pedantry. To say that this may not be and cannot be because a young man or young lady of 16 cannot judge concerning their state will not do, because this same allegation would also hold as to baptism, since no father or mother is in a position to judge concerning the state of the newborn infant. In the case of baptism it goes on the ground of the confidence of faith, not upon selection. Whoever would make selection, judgment, would first have to wait for the age of adulthood in order to baptize. . . . Not from yourself, nor from your child, but from your God and His covenant must the reckoning proceed. If His word testifies that the children of believers are indeed holy, then we leave the

further choice to the one who knows the heart, cleaving to His word. And we have our newborn children baptized. But in the same way of thinking, it also fits then that the baptized child, as soon as it awakens to self-consciousness should come to confession, not as proof of learning or of spiritual certainty, but as consequence and outflowing of his baptism and at the same time as transition to communion."

Dr. H. Bouwman, on the other hand, maintains a different outlook in his "Gereformeerd Kerkrecht," II, p. 384: "To make confession at a very young age is as a rule to be rejected (avoided). At the age of 13 to 15 one's judgment is not ripe, and his knowledge is not pure. The custom of the Reformation period, which is still followed in some countries, gave occasion for the decadence of the church. As a rule we may fix the age of 17 to 21 as the most indicated (favorable) time for the making of confession of faith. It is good for one to make confession while young because thereby he feels himself closely bound to the church, because he gives himself consciously under church discipline, and this at the same time can serve as a restraint for a restrained and Christian life. But this last may not be the motive of confession. After all when public confession simply must serve as a bridle, it becomes de-natured and a mere mouth confession is given shelter. In the age of crisis the young man or young woman has need of spiritual guidance. And they must not make confession otherwise than with self-consciousness, with knowledge of the truths of salvation, according to the rule followed by the church. He who is unfaithful, however, and follows the world, who despises the confession and the sacrament, must be ecclesiastically admonished, and, in the case of stiff-necked persistence in that evil, excommunicated."

I find myself in substantial agreement with these remarks of Bouwman, and I submit the following considerations against this second proposition:

1) While it is true that early confession of faith finds historical support in the fact that confession at the age of 14 was the rule during the Reformation period, it is also true that this very custom was an important factor in producing a doctrinally weak church, so that soon Arminianism could run wild in the Dutch church.

2) Especially the age of early adolescence is still in every respect — physically, psychologically, and spiritually — a formative, unstable, and immature period. The early adolescent is just beginning to think for himself, form his own opinions and judgments, and arrive at his own conclusions. He does not yet act and must not be expected to act as a mature individual. And if we may assume that one's spiritual development and growth runs, generally speaking parallel to his physical and psychological development and growth — as I think we may — then we should not expect an adolescent to act as a mature individual spiritually either. To do so nevertheless could lead to grave spiritual consequences, both for the church and for that individual. And, while we are

on this subject, anyway, personally I think that nowadays we encourage and even force those who are still very much children to act far too "grown up" for their own age and their own good. Too many young people today are given the privileges and prerogatives of a more advanced age while they are both unwilling and unprepared to bear the responsibilities—or even to discern the responsibilities—that are paired with these privileges and prerogatives. And we must not fall into the same snare spiritually.

3) In our doctrinally weak age we ought not to de-emphasize the doctrinal and intellectual aspect of confession of faith, but rather emphasize it more. After all, faith is *knowledge* as well as confidence. And the latter is impossible without the former. Besides, in the very questions for public confession of faith our young people are asked to express agreement with the doctrine taught in our churches. How, pray tell, can they ever do this unless and until they have been thoroughly instructed in this doctrine? In our churches their formal doctrinal instruction does not even begin until they are at least 13 years old. And when I consider how woefully weak some of our covenant youth can be in knowledge of distinctive Reformed doctrine even when they appear at the consistory meetings for confession of faith in late adolescence, I tremble to think what the results would be if they made confession of faith before they were even 15 years old. I am afraid you would have to reduce the doctrinal requirements to the barest generalities, and thereby also throw away the future doctrinal strength of the church.

4) I believe it would be both unfair and impossible to make a distinction among the communicant members of the church by requiring part of them to continue their catechetical instruction after they have made confession of faith and been admitted to the Lord's Supper.

5) The proper way to combat false notions of church membership and evil tendency on the part of covenant youth to "sow their wild oats" and to postpone confession of faith with the false notion that as long as they are not communicants they have a certain license to live more loosely is not by an enforced and mechanical and legislated early confession of faith. The problem is mainly a spiritual one. And the means to combat this evil, to the extent that it exists, must also be spiritual. From the pulpit and in the catechism class, by instruction, by warning and admonition, by a clear and firm insistence upon the covenant calling of our youth, by stern and loving discipline, and also by the covenant instruction of home and school, this evil must be fought. There is no other successful means than that of fostering in our children a keen covenant consciousness and sensitivity and a warm covenant zeal to the utmost of our power. True, this must be done from childhood on; but the critical period of early adolescence is especially the age for this.

6) I would also cite our slowness and even loathness to discipline members by baptism, especially adolescents, as an

objection here. How many of our elders would be prepared to classify as unbelieving and ungodly—or even to begin to think of one as unbelieving and ungodly—those who have not made confession of faith by the age of 15 or 16? Consistories can already be slow to treat a baptized member in his twenties; and they certainly would not be ready to discipline in the negative sense of the word one who is in his mid-teens.

7) Nor should we forget that historically the Reformed churches have allowed infant baptism (that is, baptism without a confession of faith) up to the age of 14 and even 15 years. Whether you agree with this or not, the fact remains that this has been practiced. And it is an indication that at least they have not considered those in their early teens to be ready for confession of faith.

8) This practice would either lend itself to the revivalistic spirit of our American religious age and result in immature, emotional confessions of faith, or it would lend itself to a dead orthodoxy and the resultant mechanical and automatic confession of faith of all early teenagers. In both cases the confession of faith would be unconsidered, lightly made, and just as lightly denied.

### III. *Should we encourage our adolescents at all to partake of the Lord's Supper?*

To this my answer would be: Yes, by all means!

And under this answer I want to make the following observations:

1) It should always be remembered that confession of faith is an individual matter. Within the broad period of adolescence no minimum age for confession of faith can be fixed. Nor should confession of faith become a mass activity and a sort of democratic thing. Our young people should be warned against this too, lest one makes confession of faith just because another, possibly his friend, does so, and because he does not like to go before that "austere" consistory alone.

2) As a general rule, late adolescence—let us say, approximately from one's seventeenth to his nineteenth year—is the time for a maturely made, knowledgeable confession of faith. Here again, I want to qualify this by emphasizing that you cannot legislate this as the *only* time for confession of faith. But generally, this age is indicated by:

a) The very nature of this age of adolescence. Late adolescence is the time of decisions in much of our life. It is at this time that one takes up or decides upon his life's work. It is at this time that one begins to think seriously about, and even to choose, his life's partner. From this same point of view, it is at this age that one comes to a mature, firm knowledge and assurance of his living part with Christ.

b) By the fact that at this age one's doctrinal training and instruction has been completed in our churches as far as the formal instruction of the catechism class is concerned. That

doctrinal instruction should include a study of the Heidelberg Catechism of approximately two years, a study of the Netherland Confession of two terms of catechism, and if possible some study of the Canons and of the history and doctrinal issues of 1924. Such a basic doctrinal course is not designed to make little theologians out of our covenant youth, but to furnish them with the basic doctrinal equipment which a Reformed believer needs. And one should not neglect his opportunities for doctrinal training in order to make early confession of faith. This is not to say, of course, that doctrinal instruction and study should be neglected afterwards. For there is plenty of room for further study even after confession of faith.

3) Confession of faith should be increasingly the goal that is held before covenant youth as they enter the period of adolescence. This, after all, is the very purpose of their catechetical instruction. And our youth should be reminded of this. Along these lines, I would suggest the following:

a) The spiritual aspect of catechetical instruction should receive a greater emphasis than it usually does. The doctrinal instruction should be *applied*. Covenant youth must be made to understand that catechism is not simply a matter of knowledge and understanding in the intellectual sense, much as any course in school, but a matter of *believing with the heart*. I fear that this is often neglected in the catechism room.

b) To these same matters the preaching of the Word must call attention. Our youth must not be permitted to get the impression that the preaching of the Word is for their parents and for communicant members, and for themselves only when they "get good and ready for it."

c) Our pastors (and elders), particularly in the work of family visitation, have an excellent opportunity to give wise spiritual counsel to the youth of the congregation. By this I do not mean that all covenant youth should be bluntly told in their teens that they should make confession of faith, but rather that a pastor should talk with and to his young people, counsel with them, help them to gain an insight into the matter, to see the seriousness of it, aid them with their questions and doubts. This is a spiritual art. But every pastor should strive to get close to his young people above all and to gain their confidence and respect, so that they seek his help and counsel and prize it.

4) Errant youth should be dealt with very promptly and firmly and seriously. They should be the object of the special attention and care of pastors and elders. And disciplinary labors in the sense of admonition and warning should not by any means be neglected. For this period of early adolescence is frequently a crisis-period in a negative sense especially. It is not so much the case that covenant young people come to conscious conversion in the full and mature sense of the word in this period of their lives; but rather, in a negative sense, a tendency to rebel and to be indifferent and even to

come to open alienation with respect to the church and religion has its inception in this period. G. Brillenburg Wurth discusses this aspect of our subject capably, I think, in his *Christelijke Zielzorg*, pp. 177, ff. And he makes the point that up to about the age of 15 it is quite possible to keep a hold on the young people, but that when the time comes that they become more or less independent, find their own work circle, come into contact with a different spiritual milieu, then it becomes more difficult to maintain contact with them any longer. And therefore, this period is not the time of positive decision, but the time for counsel and guidance with a view to confession of faith in late adolescence. If then, however, late adolescence passes without confession of faith, there is cause for concern. And, depending, of course, on individual circumstances, the church should not be slow to deal with such delinquents as "covenant-breakers."

For we must always remember that the church consists of believers and their children. And while adolescence is a period of transition also spiritually, if one is neither a believer nor a child he has no place in the gathering of the church on earth, and should be made to understand this. For his own sake, for the sake of the purity of the church, for the sake of the sanctity of the means of grace, and for the sake of the holiness of our God this must be strictly maintained in the church. But by the same token, the church must labor mightily with its children and youth, instructing and training them in the way of God's covenant, with the positive purpose in view that they may in due time, in God's own time, assume their place consciously in that covenant. And we have God's promise appended to such training: "When they are old, they shall not depart therefrom."

H.C.H.

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Let all who seek Thee now rejoice,  
 Yea, glad in Thee abide,  
 And, loving Thy salvation, say,  
 The Lord be magnified.  
 My lowly state and bitter need  
 The Lord has not forgot;  
 Thou art my Saviour and my help,  
 Come, Lord, and tarry not.

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Let children learn God's righteous ways  
 And on Him stay their heart,  
 That they may not forget His works  
 Nor from His ways depart.

## DECENCY and ORDER

### The Sacraments

Beginning with Article 56, our Church Order devotes nine articles to the subject of the Sacraments. The first five, Articles 56 to 60 inclusive, deal with various questions relating to the sacrament of Holy Baptism and the last four, Articles 61 to 64 inclusive, treat the subject of the Lord's Supper. In our discussion of this subject, we are not to treat the *doctrinal* aspect of the sacraments. This belongs to another department in our *Standard Bearer* and, therefore, our discussion must be limited to questions of order that relate to Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Before introducing these questions to our readers, it may be of interest to see what changes the Christian Reformed Church makes in these articles in their proposed revision of the Church Order. In this revision two articles are devoted to the sacrament of Baptism and two articles deal with the Lord's Supper. One article is devoted to the treatment of the sacraments in general. We will quote these articles and insert in parentheses for purposes of comparison those parts of our own Church Order that relate to these revisions. In this way we can readily see what changes are made in the formulation.

Article 62 of the revision reads: "The administration of the sacraments shall take place only upon the authority of the consistory, with the use of the ecclesiastical forms, and in a public gathering of believers."

This article deals with the sacraments in general. In our Church Order there is no specific statement to the effect that the sacraments are to be administered only upon the authority of the consistory. This is obviously taken for granted. The composers of our Church Order felt no need to express this since no *Reformed* person would question the validity of this statement. The very nature of the sacraments themselves is indicative of the fact that they cannot be administered anywhere besides in the instituted church and such administration would naturally fall under the authority or jurisdiction of the consistory. However, in our day of general ignorance regarding Reformed principles, it may not be superfluous to express this. What could obviously be assumed in a period when Reformed theology flourished is not so evident any more today.

Our Church Order does specify that both the sacraments are to be administered with the "respective forms drawn up for their administration" (Arts. 58 and 62). Likewise does our Church Order provide that the sacraments are to be administered only "in the public assembly where the Word of God is preached" (Art. 56) or "where there is supervision of elders, according to the ecclesiastical order and in a public gathering of the congregation" (Art. 64).

Articles 63 and 64 of the proposed revision deal with Baptism. These articles read:

"The Sacrament of Baptism shall be administered to children of communicant members, (*unto the children of Christians*) in the public assembly of the congregation when the Word is preached. Consistories shall urge parents not to postpone the baptism of their children needlessly (*as soon as the administration thereof is feasible*). If parents are prevented by lingering sickness or death, or for some other valid reason, from presenting their child for baptism, others shall present such a child for baptism in the capacity of sponsors. Only such sponsors shall be approved by consistories as are in a position to take upon themselves the baptismal promises. (Our Church Order makes no provision for sponsors in baptism.) Baptisms administered by other Christian denominations, or in groups of believers by one authorized by such groups, shall be acknowledged as valid if it can be ascertained that the parties concerned were baptized in the Name of the Triune God." (Our Church Order is also silent on this matter, the recognition of baptisms by other groups.)

"The Sacrament of Baptism shall be administered, upon a proper profession of faith, to adults who have not been baptized previously. When such adults are baptized, they are by that fact admitted to all privileges of the church. (Adults are through baptism incorporated into the Christian church, and are accepted as members of the church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their baptism.)" Of interest in this connection is the fact that the revision speaks of membership "*privileges*" while our Church Order uses the term denoting "*obligations*."

Articles 57 and 60 of our Church Order are omitted from the revision. The former provides that "The ministers shall do their utmost to the end that the father present his child for baptism." The latter deals with the recording of "the names of those baptized, together with those of the parents, and likewise the date of birth and baptism."

In the proposed revision Articles 65 and 67 deal with the Lord's Supper. The 66th article of this revision treats another matter which is of no concern to us in this connection. Concerning the Lord's Supper the aforementioned articles have this to say:

"Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper and all membership privileges after they have made profession of the Reformed faith and have manifested their faith by a godly conduct." This article corresponds to our 61st Article which reads: "None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of the church with which they unite themselves have made a confession of the Reformed religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly walk, without which those who come from other churches shall not be admitted."

Article 67 of the revision: "The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months. (This is the same as our Article 63.) Every church shall administer it in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to



edification, provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word are not changed, and all superstition is avoided. At the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers, the form for the Lord's Supper, together with the prayers incorporated in that form (*the prayers for that purpose*), shall be read. (The same as our Art. 62.) Each administration of the Lord's Supper shall be preceded by a preparatory sermon and followed by an applicatory sermon." This last provision is not included in our Church Order but it is found in the questions asked of each consistory by the church visitors. Nothing of the four articles found in our Church Order and dealing with the Lord's Supper is omitted in the proposed revision. The content of these articles is condensed into two articles with the one addition mentioned above. With the exception of that addition, one would wonder why a revision is desired or necessary. Is this a case of desiring a change just for the sake of change? Is the formulation of these articles in the proposed form such a big improvement? We fail to see that it is and would, therefore, also fail to find any reason that Articles 61 through 64 cannot remain as they are in our present Church Order.

#### *Infant Baptism*

*"The covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Christians by baptism, as soon as the administration thereof is feasible, in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached"* (Art. 56, D.K.O.).

It is tempting, to say the least, to commence our discussion of this article by treating the matter of the covenant, the seal of the covenant which is baptism, and questions relating to the validity of the practice of *infant* baptism. To do so, however, would be to intrude into the department of doctrine. Interesting and important though these doctrines are, we will not introduce them here but rather limit ourselves in the consideration of this article of the Church Order to these questions:

1. At what time should children be baptized?
2. Which children are to receive the sacrament of baptism?
3. By whom is baptism to be administered?
4. Where must the sacrament be administered?

#### *Time of Baptism*

Our Church Order states that baptism should be administered "*as soon as feasible*." Rev. Ophoff points out in his *Church Right* that the original reading of this article was a little different. It read: "*as soon as possible*." That these two are not the same is plain. The latter expression points to an earlier baptism since what is possible may not always be feasible and if, therefore, feasibility is to determine the time of baptism, it could easily be postponed for a matter of weeks. The main objection that Rev. Ophoff brings against this substitution of words, however, is that according to Scripture baptism was always administered just as soon as possible. Especially the book of Acts testifies to this for without

exception adults and their families were baptized immediately upon their conversion to Christ.

The Reformed fathers always advocated early baptisms. Guido de Bres, author of our Belgic Confession, is said to have had his child baptized on the day of its birth. It was not an uncommon practice in Reformed churches that children were baptized on the first Sunday after their birth and in some instances baptism was even administered during the week-day services. Time was not given to the mother to recover her strength after child-birth. She was not present at the baptism. The father, as the head of the family, presented the child for baptism. It must be remembered that the Reformed fathers did not advocate early baptisms for the same reason that the Roman Catholic Church does. This practice of Rome, according to Monsma and Van Dellen, "rests on her belief that baptism imparts regeneration, and that if an infant dies unbaptized it cannot be saved. Its soul, if it dies prior to baptism, goes neither to heaven nor to hell, but to a special place indicated by the Latin term '*limbus infantum*.' In this abode of infants the souls of these children are ever doomed to continue in an intermediate state, experiencing neither joy nor sorrow without ever being able to escape." Our fathers repudiated that theory but nevertheless advocated early baptisms mainly for the following reasons:

1. Baptism is the token of the covenant and children, therefore, who are born in the historic line of the covenant ought to receive that sign as soon as possible.
2. Circumcision in the Old Testament was administered eight days after birth. Seven days, pointing to sin and impurity, had to be fulfilled before circumcision could take place but for the New Testament believers this ceremonial barricade has been removed and, therefore, the sign of the covenant should be administered as soon as possible.
3. It would be a sign of ingratitude to postpone baptism for our children.
4. The examples of Scripture point to early baptisms.

Perhaps the original position of the fathers was a bit severe and extreme but it is far better than the opposite position of fixing the time of baptism according to personal convenience and often postponing it for all kinds of trivial reasons. Perhaps the parents desire a certain minister, the baby needs certain new clothes, friends or relatives from a distance must be present who cannot make it at an earlier date, etc. We do not now mean that there are no *legitimate* reasons to postpone baptism, as for example, the sickness of the child, but that is something else. To use baptism as a superstitious custom or an emotional ritual is to play lightly with the holy ordinances of God and this is no small sin. Then our fathers' position of insisting that baptism be administered as soon as possible is to be preferred. There is, however, no violation in the practice that is current in our churches to have the child presented in baptism as soon as the father and mother are able to do so together. G.V.d.B.

## ALL AROUND US

### SEGREGATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The problem of racial segregation in this country has been primarily a social one. The subject appears in the newspapers when it involves the public schools, the equal use of parks, lunch counters, busses, etc. by both black and white, the participation in politics and the right of Negroes to vote in elections. This has not prevented various churches in our own country from speaking out on this problem and taking a stand with respect to it, and even the Christian Reformed Church discussed the problem some years ago, but it has not primarily affected the churches. This is not the case in the Union of South Africa. There the problem has always had strong religious overtones. This is due in part to the fact that the Reformed Church in South Africa, a church of strong Calvinistic traditions, has run the country for many years through its political party. In fact, the present Premier is a member of the Reformed Church. Although in reality there are three Reformed Churches, the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk and the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerken of Cape and Transvaal, they have usually stood united against any form of integration. They have maintained this position, so they claimed, on the basis of Scripture itself. For their position they have been severely castigated by other church bodies throughout the world; and, in fact, at one time there was a movement afoot in the World Council of Churches, to which these Reformed Churches belong, to force them to change their racial ways or bar them from membership.

Recently there have been some minor changes in the position of the Dutch Reformed Church there. These changes have been reported in a recent issue of *Time* magazine. The occasion was a seven day "consultation" on "South Africa's racial problems between six representatives of the World Council of Churches and ten delegates from each of South Africa's eight Protestant Churches that are World Council Members." Although the council was strongly critical of segregation, the significant fact remains that several delegates from the Dutch Reformed Churches backed the resolution, and the two larger of the Reformed Churches expressed that although "a policy of differentiation can be defended from the Christian point of view," it suggested that black Africans who are permanent dwellers in white areas should be granted a share in government. This was interpreted by everyone, the Council itself, the government, and leading churchmen, as being a fundamental departure from the position of the church. The premier, Hendrik Verwoerd, was highly displeased with it, and interpreted it as an attack on the policies of his government.

The excitement over the decision is due to the tremendous amount of criticism which formerly had been directed toward

the government and the church the world over, and the fact that should the church change its stand, the government will eventually have to do likewise.

Our churches as a whole, nor, to the best of my knowledge, any individual congregation has never faced the question of integration, nor made any decisions concerning it. It seems to me that the question, from a Scriptural point of view, is not as easy as it is sometimes made out to be. There is no question about it that since the church of Jesus Christ is gathered from all nations and tribes and tongues, there are members of the black race which are also included within that church. Furthermore, there is no question about it that within the church at least, there is no class system which would place the negro in a position inferior to the white. Besides, it is also evident that the unity of the church of Jesus Christ precludes any spiritual segregation, or the denial of any privileges and rights to the negro in his membership in the church. But whether it follows from this that complete integration of the white and the negro in the family, the school, the church is required, is another question. I cannot see how, from a principle point of view, and within the life of the church, that segregation in these institutions denies either a negro or a white certain privileges and rights. Maybe in practice that is the outcome of the matter; but it seems as if it need not necessarily follow. Why segregation of the family, the school, or the church places the negro and the white in an inferior position is difficult to see. But the problem is perhaps worth some discussion.

### THE SUPPORT OF OUR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

In the January issue of the *Torch and Trumpet*, Rev. H. J. Kuiper faces the problem of the financial support of the Christian Schools in an article entitled, "The Financial Problem of our Christian Schools." He introduces his article by stating that the reason for the fact that the support of our schools is such a great problem is due to their continual growth and the need for more buildings and larger plants. Besides the cost of education is going up with an increase in the cost of tuition, which makes it difficult for parents with three or four children attending the schools to meet the cost of education and the responsibilities of supporting the schools in collections and drives.

He mentions three different ways in which this problem has recently been faced in various congregations. The first is by the establishment of an endowment fund, the interest of which could be used for the running expenses of the school. He admits that this may be a step in the right direction, but raises the objections that it is impracticable and may lead to the loss of personal sacrifice of the people in the support of the schools. The second means used is for churches to assume an ever greater share of the financial responsibility of supporting the schools. But he feels that this is dangerous, for it leads to parochial schools. And while the churches should give all the moral and financial support of which they are

capable, and while it is better to have parochial schools than to allow the financial burden of the parents to become too heavy, nevertheless, this is not a trend in the right direction. There is finally the possibility of Booster Clubs which undertake the full cost of the tuition of the children within the church which they represent. Although this may be a partial solution to the problem, it in turn raises its own problems, such as the refusal of these Booster Clubs to contribute to emergency deficit drives.

The real solution to the problem, however, the author finds in the serious lack of knowledge among the people as to the true nature of Christian giving. He makes the points: 1) that all members of the congregation and not only those who have children in school are responsible for the financial support of the schools. 2) that giving should be proportionate to our financial ability, should be sacrificial and should be systematic. 3) that the best way to accomplish these goals is through tithing, which, while desiring to avoid the legalism of it, he nevertheless strongly advocates.

It is certainly a fact that our schools face the same problems of financial support as do the existing Christian schools. Perhaps our problem is not quite as acute as the problem of some of the other schools, but it is here nonetheless. Not only do our school boards have a constant struggle with finances, but our parents oftentimes have heavy burdens to carry.

It is altogether possible that one reason for the difficulties in the Christian schools other than our own is to be found in the struggle within the Christian Reformed Church for the need of Christian Schools at all. If the people are not fully convinced that there is a need for Christian Schools, then, of course, there will be problems of support. I make this statement because some time ago there was an exchange of articles in the *Reformed Journal* and in the *Torch and Trumpet* discussing the basis for Christian education. A writer in the *Reformed Journal* maintained at that time that the doctrine of the covenant could not possibly serve as a basis for Christian education, it being the basis only for missionary work. The basis for Christian education was to be found rather in the parent-child relationship. This was disputed by another writer in the *Torch and Trumpet*, who maintained that the covenant of grace had to be the basis. But the point was made once again in the *Reformed Journal* that the doctrine of the covenant of the Christian Reformed Church was that the covenant was an agreement between two parties. And since the covenant was such an agreement, it followed that children could not enter into it by way of such an agreement; that therefore the schools where children were educated could not be based on the covenant. Rather the purpose of missionary work was to secure such an agreement from the objects of the church's missionary endeavor.

It stands to reason that should the basis for schools be a parent-child relationship, all reason for Christian schools is

gone. If this is all that can be said, it follows that a Christian education is not at all mandatory, for this same parent-child relationship is present in the world. And if, in turn, this is true, then the people will not be ready to support such Christian institutions at such considerable cost.

I too agree that if the covenant is to be defined as an agreement between two parties, this doctrine of the covenant cannot possibly be used as a basis for Christian education of the youth of the church, for they cannot be included in such a covenant; they cannot enter into an agreement. But certainly, it is altogether incorrect to define the covenant in such a way. It is a gracious bond of fellowship and communion between God and His elect people, established by God through Jesus Christ, and including in it elect believers and their spiritual seed. If we maintain this as the truth of God's everlasting covenant of grace, we have a firm foundation upon which to build our schools, a firm need of such schools, and a firm obligation to support these schools in which the covenant seed is trained. And indeed, it must be remembered that the obligation to support the schools where the seed of the covenant is trained is not only the obligation of parents with children in schools, but the obligation of the entire church. If these points are clearly made and remembered, then I can agree with Rev. Kuiper when he says,

"The nub of the financial problem of our Christian schools is the fact that the burden of the support of these schools rests on too few people, namely on the parents whose children attend these schools. There are too many families in our congregations which have a good income and could make substantial contributions to this worthy cause but fail to do so because they are unmarried or do not yet have or no longer have children who attend. What they fail to realize is that *the proper training of our children as good citizens and worthy members of the church should be a matter of deep concern to every single family and member of the church.*"

I know that this is done through church collections. Many people in our churches without children of their own in school contribute generously towards the education of our children. And this is good.

It is another matter whether parents with three or more children in school can always meet their tuition. It seems as if the churches do have a responsibility here through the diaconate to help their members who cannot pay their tuition. But it is even possible that parents without any children in school, but with financial means to support children, could assume the responsibility of the cost of educating one or two children as long as this would be necessary. It is at least worth thinking about.

H. Hanko

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

*"All the saints salute thee . . ." PHIL. 4:21*

January 5, 1961

Randolph's congregation called Rev. R. C. Harbach of Lynden, from a trio which included the Revs. C. Hanko and M. Schipper.

The Prot. Ref. Men's Chorus rendered their Christmas Program on Christmas Day, after the evening service, in First Church. The Chorus opened the program with two prayers, "Let Thy Holy Presence" and "O Jesus, Grant Me Hope And Comfort." A few intricate numbers such as, "By Babylon's Wave," "Listen To The Lambs," and the final number, "With A Voice Of Singing" demonstrated the Chorus' ability. Familiar Christmas Carols brightened the program in unfamiliar arrangements for male voices. The Chorus, under the direction of Mr. Ronald Petersen, and accompanied by Jim Jonker, pleased the large audience gathered in the auditorium (some for the fourth time that day) and fittingly brought to a close a day set aside for the praise of the King born in Bethlehem's cattle stall. The men were assisted by a soprano soloist, Mrs. Walter Decker, of First Church, and by a brass quintet from Adams St. School. Two visitors to the concert, Mr. and Mrs. I. Korhorn, of Hope Church, were struck by a car as they were crossing the street to the church. Mrs. Korhorn received bruises, and her husband suffered a broken hip in the accident. The police ambulance answering the call was operated by Officer George Ophoff, Jr., member of First Church, on ambulance duty that evening.

Rev. C. Hanko was granted a two week leave of absence from his duties at First Church to labor in Manhattan, Mont., at the request of the Mission Committee. The request originated in an urgent appeal to the Mission Committee for someone to guide a remnant of the congregation there who are opposed to the direction taken by their brethren as to their denominational affiliation. During his colleague's absence the Rev. H. Hoeksema took up the full burden of pulpit supply for New Year's Eve and the two New Year's Day services.

*Well, Christmas programs are over for another year; does that mean we have to wait another year for a Christmas sermon?*

Mr. Peter Kooistra, member of First Church and the oldest member of the entire denomination, celebrated his 96th birthday anniversary Christmas Day. That day's bulletin read, "With him we rejoice in all the blessings of the Lord that he might experience through these many years, and together we are gratified that he can still be active in and about his home as he witnesses of the faithfulness of his God."

Holland's consistory has decided to call the congregation

to worship at 9:30 Sunday mornings, instead of at 10 o'clock.

Hudsonville's Christmas Day bulletin carried this paragraph: "The second collection next Sunday is for the Gideons who place Bibles in hotels, motels, prisons, etc., all over the world, and which is a wonderful assist to pure mission work. Today's bulletin cover is provided by the Gideons so that we may learn what they do."

*Do you agree — that because Christmas Day fell on Sunday this year, the world was not quite so successful as other years in robbing us of our church holiday?*

We learn from Oak Lawn's bulletin that Rev. A. Mulder, of Kalamazoo, was scheduled to lecture in South Holland, Jan. 6, the topic of the lecture being, "Gog and Magog." The announcement advertising the lecture posed this question, "Do you know what Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20 mean for us today?"

The South Holland-Oak Lawn Choral Society meets regularly every Wednesday evening at South Holland. They are preparing for a public concert at some future date, tentatively set for April 9.

South East's Church was the meeting place for the Office Bearers' Conference held Jan. 3. The occasion drew one of the largest gatherings of office bearers in the history of the Conference. Rev. H. Hanko, of Hope Church, was the speaker, and his assigned topic was of initial importance, answering two questions, "What is our calling towards those who left us in '53?"; and, "What should we require of them for their re-admittance?" The speaker mourned the fact that our experience knows no analogy in the history of the church, and therefore the Church Order does not provide us with a clear-cut answer to the problem. Article No. 75 speaks of sinners who are still members of the church, and Article No. 78 deals with the reconciliation of an excommunicated person. The Reverend nevertheless drew from these Articles the broad principles that the returning sinner must come back by way of reconciliation; that said reconciliation be effected by confession of sin, thereby giving evidence of the sincerity of his repentance; and, that said confession must be made in the consistory against which he sinned, that that which caused the breach may be removed. The speaker further contended that, maintaining our position as the historical continuation of the Protestant Reformed Churches, it is our calling to place them before their obligation to join the purest manifestation of the Body of Christ on earth. After recess questions were raised and answered, and opinions were aired, providing guidance for the consistories represented by the office bearers present.

*A call to all consistory clerks:* Please send us the names of Clerks and Treasurers, if other than listed in the Year Book, that we may report this information to our people by way of this page.

. . . . see you in church.

J.M.F.