

THE STANDARD

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MEDITATION

COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5

When you read this, it will already be 1961!

But I am still in the old year while I write this.

I want to say something to you with regard to the changing of the year.

And as always, I sought and found a word of God.

As you stand before a New Year, roll your way unto the Lord: for He is the only Almighty God, and merciful Father. He will take care of you.

Psalm 37 harbors a great contrast between the righteous and the wicked. You find in it a description of the wicked and the righteous, as well as their end.

The context of my text is sweet as honey and the honeycomb.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord!" Can you think of anything sweeter than that? Think on the Godhead in terms of delight, pleasure, ecstasy. Is there anything in this sorry world that can be compared to that activity?

Start from the beginning of the psalm: Do not fret thyself because of evil men; trust in God; delight thyself in Him, and then roll your way on Him: He is strong, and able to take care of all your way. And the result will be that He will recreate you unto a glorious vessel of mercy.

No, this does not mean that you are the first, and God a glorious second.

It is presupposed that you are already alive unto Him. The poet is David, the man after God's own heart.

But, nevertheless, we are taught here that God will recreate your life in such a way that you will be the beautiful Bride of Christ in the day when He will make up His jewels.

Body and soul, with the whole of the church of Christ, shall be to His glorious praises forever more.

* * * *

Our way, what is it?

Your way is your whole life, period.

From the cradle to the grave with all that lies in between. But from the point of view of the heart. All the issues of your life proceed from the heart, so that as the heart of man is, so is he!

It includes progress, direction and destination.

Hence, it is so terribly important that we keep our heart above all that is to be kept, for out of it are the issues of our lives.

Commit thy way unto the Lord!

It is not so evident from the English translation, but in the Hebrew we have here a mixed metaphor. It says literally: Roll thy way unto the Lord.

The word used here has the figure of a burden which you are to throw on the Lord.

And why should we throw our burden upon God?

First, because it is a burden. From the cradle to the grave. It is a wonder that we get to be as old as we are. That is not always so clear, especially when we are young, or when all things turn out to our advantage and then I mean to the advantage of the flesh. Then things look rosy, and we laugh and play, and are in good spirits.

But look somewhat deeper, and better still, read Psalm 90:10. And there we read: Their strength is labor and sorrow! That is, the strength of our days, that is, the best of our days here on earth.

And why?

That is easy: it is so because of sin and guilt. That's enough to make us weep all the day long. From infancy to our last death throb, we are sinners against God, and consequently we are guilty and damn worthy.

Our whole life from the heart is running in minus, an

everlasting minus, falling far short of the glory of God's sanctuary.

Is that not enough to make you weep?

Look at the life which you lived in 1960; look at it through the spectacles of the law of God, and weep.

It's all corrupt, evil, unrighteous, and damnable. It is so evil, my dear readers, that if you are to be judged according to your life's work, you will spend eternity in the lake of fire and brimstone, weeping and gnashing your teeth.

Now, the man that knows this has a hard life.

Do you want proof?

Then read the psalms of David, and note how often he grovels in the dust before the face of God.

When the Spirit of grace opens your eyes, so that you can read and understand the Word of God, you find the proof in your evening prayer. And I mean your evening prayer, at the conclusion of each and every day of your life.

Our life is a burden.

But the result, the reward of sin, is a greater burden.

I have said sometimes from the pulpit: "If you want to know something about what hell is like, you must ask a child of God!"

You do not understand that? Then read Psalm 116:3, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." Or go to Moses and listen to this man of God: "For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled." Psalm 90:7.

Sin incurs guilt, and guilt is liability to punishment, and punishment is hell.

Believe it, dear reader, our way is a mess!

It is that at its very inception. When we are born, we have a load of guilt pressing down upon us in the cradle, and when we progress on the way, we make that burden heavier.

We see that every evening, but at the evening of the year it becomes oppressive beyond our days. We think then on the 365 days that flew past, and are weary with our days.

* * * *

There is no man who is able to carry that burden. And, therefore, the Lord comes to us in the evening of the year, and tells us: Cast that burden upon Me!

And leave it there!

This last thought we find in the sentence: "trust also in Him!"

To trust in God means that you patiently wait on Him: He will surely make it come to pass.

Wait on the Lord!

He is able to bear that burden, in fact, He has carried that burden for you already. Objectively, God has carried that burden from all eternity. Objectively, He carried that burden all through the weary years of the Old Dispensation. Objectively, He carried that burden on the Cross.

How do I know that?

The Bible tells me that the Lamb of God was slain from before the foundation of the world.

I believe that God has justified His saints from everlasting.

But here is the point of this psalm: God wants you to believe that when you see your mess. He wants you to have that justification in your heart. Therefore, He says to you and to me in the eve of the year: Cast that burden on My shoulders: you cannot bear it!

And leave that burden there: trust in Me!

Many, many years ago, when I was a child, I heard old men pray within my hearing, and they said in their prayers: "O God! dat wij ons mogen laten zakken en zinken op U, de Rots die van geen wankelen weet!" Freely translated that would be something like this: O God, that we may let ourselves fall and sink down upon Thee the Rock who does not know of any wavering!

So, trust in the Lord after throwing your burden on Him, and He will surely take care of you.

However, there is one thing we must keep before our mind in this connection. And that is this: to cast your burden on God, and to trust in Him wholly, does not mean that you just sit. Oh no, but a true Christian works all the day long, uses all the means, is busy in sanctification and all good works. However, after all is said and done, you trust in God who is a complete Savior.

* * * *

And what is the result of the action of the true believer?

This: "And He shall bring it to pass."

Now remember that this is a poor translation.

The literal translation is this: "And He shall create!"

Hence, it means that God shall perform the perfect work for you.

And what is that?

Undoubtedly it refers to your whole life. For that is the subject of this text. Remember? It was your way which was at stake. You must cast your way upon the Lord and trust that He will take care of it.

Well, He will and He has.

It is a wonderfully comforting thought at the evening

of this year, and at the beginning of another year of our Lord. The thought namely, that God will create.

It means this: through the wonder of the Incarnate Word your life is entirely renewed. Attend to this text: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10.

The phrase: "created in Christ Jesus" is exactly the meaning of that part of my text which says: "and He shall create."

It means that He gives you the life of Christ in regeneration, and conversion, and sanctification. It means that He has removed all your sin and guilt through the self-sacrifice of God in the Mediator on the cross of Calvary. It means that He has clothed you with the fine and pure linen which is the justification of the saints.

And the basis is the cross of Jesus Christ.

Trust in that cross, in that Christ, in that God of your salvation. Rest in Him, trust and rely on Him and He will create. He will go on creating, until you are body and soul in heaven, in the second, in the last Paradise of God. Oh yes, in that trust let us enter 1961! Amen.

G.V.

Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet on Wednesday, January 4, at Southeast Protestant Reformed Church at 9 A. M.

Delegates of the various consistories comprising Classis East will please take note.

REV. M. SCHIPPER, *Stated Clerk*

Office-Bearers' Conference

will be held January 3 at 8 o'clock in Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. Herman Hanko will be the speaker. Topic: "What should be our attitude toward those who left our church, and what should be required of them for readmittance?" All present and former office-bearers are urged to attend. It was decided at our previous meeting, that our Ministers are also invited to our meetings.

JOHN DOCTER, *Sec.*

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
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Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

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Rev. H. Hoeksema, 1139 Franklin St., S. E.,
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All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr.
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EDITORIALS

About Being Protestant Reformed

In the last number of our *Standard Bearer* I was discussing an article that appeared in the *Missionary Monthly*, written by Dr. Jerome De Jong. I was not quite finished with my discussion. Hence, I must now finish my criticism.

First of all, I must quote once more from the article in question. Dr. De Jong writes as follows:

"We also want to consider that 'well-meant' gospel offer." Is the gospel only for the elect? Does God really want men saved? It is beyond me that men who seriously believe in the inspiration of the Bible argue away the plain invitation of such passages as "Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) and "... Not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." II Peter 3:9.

We must stop here a moment.

As to the first text which Dr. De Jong quotes, it is never advisable to quote a text outside of its immediate context, and not even apart from the entire Bible. This is exactly the way the Scriptures can be made to teach all kinds of heresies. The question is here whether this passage teaches a well-meant offer of salvation to all men anywhere, in the whole world. Dr. De Jong will, no doubt agree with me when I say that "well-meant" signifies that God through the preaching of the gospel wants all men, head for head and soul for soul, to be saved. Now the question is whether the text in Matt. 11:28 teaches this. I could quote all kinds of passages from the Bible to the contrary. But let me just adhere to the immediate context. From vs. 20ff. the Lord had upbraided the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because they had not repented though all the mighty works of the Lord had been done in them accompanied, of course, by the preaching of the gospel. But what then? Does this mean that even one of the elect of God had been lost? Does it mean that God failed in His well-meant offer, according to which He would that all the inhabitants of those cities were saved? On the contrary. In the immediate context of Matt. 11:28 we may notice that Jesus turns to the Father with thanksgiving in the following words: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Let us note, in these words of the Lord, the following plain facts:

1. The "wise and prudent" are those that are wise and prudent according to the flesh, filled with natural and worldly

knowledge, such as the people of Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum. Such we all are by nature. As such we can never hear and receive the gospel but always reject it.

2. But there is more. God could, of course, by the power of His grace, have revealed the gospel unto them. And if the preaching of the gospel were, indeed, a well-meant offer of salvation to all that hear it, He would surely have done this. But He did not do this. But what then? Is there no operation of God at all, through the preaching of the gospel, upon the hearts of these wise and prudent? There surely is: He hid these things from them. And this is the teaching of the Lord and of all Scripture through out. Thus, for instance, in John 12:37-40: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them." And again, in Rom. 9:15-18: "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, 'Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.'"

I could quote much more. But let this be sufficient.

3. Such, according to the text in Matt. 11, is God's own good pleasure: "for so it seemed good in thy sight." And that good pleasure of God is always fulfilled. But how, then, could it seem good in the sight of God to save all that hear the gospel? What about that well-meant offer of grace and salvation, if under the preaching of the gospel God hardens the hearts of the reprobates and blinds their eyes so that they can neither believe nor see?

4. Once more I must make an observation in connection with the text which I quoted above. It is this: in the same passage the Lord says: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." In the light of this I ask once more: what becomes of the so-called well-meant offer of grace and salvation, well-meant on the part of God? If under the preaching of the gospel the Son must reveal the Father, and if He does not reveal the Father to all the hearers, but only to some, i.e. the elect, to those whom the Father has given Him, and if, as far as His power is concerned, He could reveal the Father just as well to all that hear the gospel—would you still maintain that the Son is willing to save all as is the idea in the well-meant offer?

Now, in the light of this context, let us look once more

at the text in Matt. 11:28: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

1. Whom does Jesus call here? The answer is: those that labor and are heavy laden. Who are they? Not surely the physically burdened and weary, for in that sense He could not promise them rest. Hence, they must be the spiritually weary. And who are they? Surely not all men and not all those that hear the gospel; not those whom God hardens, not those that are spiritually blind, not those to whom the Son will not reveal the Father, not the wise and prudent of whom Jesus speaks in the context. Only those that are spiritually burdened and weary. They are those and those only that are conscious of their sin and misery and are sorry for their in. They are the babes of whom Jesus speaks in vs. 25.

2. To them Jesus issues the call: Come unto me. This is not a mere invitation which one may possibly accept or reject, but is the call of the gospel to all that hear and which no one has the right to reject and for which all that hear are responsible.

3. But how can anyone come to Jesus? The answer is: only when, not a man even when he preaches the gospel, proclaims the call; but when through the word of the preacher Christ Himself through the Spirit sends forth this summons into the hearts of those that labor and are heavy laden. For thus all the Scriptures teach us. In John 6:35-37 we read: "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth unto me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And again in vs. 44 of the same chapter: "No man can come to me, except that the Father that hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Hence, in Matt. 11:28 we have no well-meant offer of salvation to all that hear the gospel nor even a general invitation, but a powerful call of our Lord Jesus Christ to those that are spiritually laboring and heavy laden.

* * * *

But how about II Peter 3:9 to which Dr. De Jong also refers?

The whole text, which Dr. De Jong quotes only in part, reads as follows: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Here we remark:

1. In these words we, evidently, have no offer whatsoever but only a statement of what God does and will do and of his attitude over His people: He is longsuffering to His people. In the context the apostle had written that in the last days there would be scoffers that mocked at the idea that the Lord would ever come again. All things, so they argued remained from the beginning. To this the apostle replied, in the first place, that this is not true, for the world that was before Noah perished with the flood and the

heavens and the earth that now are will be destroyed by fire at the last day, the day of judgment.

2. Then in vs. 9 the apostle writes that God is not slack concerning his promise. In other words, He hastens to the end. But many things must take place such as the gathering in of all the elect, the coming of antichrist, the man of sin etc. All these things take place as fast as possible. And when they have been realized, God will surely fulfil His promise.

3. Hence, rather than assume that God is Slack concerning His promise we must understand that He is long-suffering over us. Here we confront several questions such as: what is meant by longsuffering; over whom is God long-suffering; and why is God longsuffering? The questions we answer as follows:

a. Longsuffering is that attitude of God over His people according to which He restrains Himself as it were, from realizing the final fulfillment of His promise until all things shall have been fulfilled and all the elect shall have been called into the church and into the fellowship of God in Christ. O, surely, He would realize the promise immediately and glorify the saints with all the glory they shall have in the new creation, if this were possible. He longs to fulfil His promise especially in view of the fact that in the world His people suffer and are in tribulation. He suffers, as it were with them. Yet, in His longsuffering He restrains Himself till all things shall have been fulfilled.

b. The second question is: over whom is God long-suffering? The answer of the text is: over us. And who are "us"? Are they all men, wicked and righteous alike? The answer is: by no means. Why must this be the answer? In the first place, because the apostle is not writing this epistle to all men but to the church, to the saints in Christ Jesus. Hence, they are denoted by the pronoun "us." In the second place, because Scripture never uses the term longsuffering with regard to the wicked reprobates (not even in Rom. 9:22), but always with respect to His own people, i.e. the elect.

c. And why is God longsuffering over them? The answer is in the text: not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. To whom does the apostle refer in these words? To all men? By no means. In the first place, if God, in His longsuffering would wait for the fulfillment of His promise till men would come to repentance, then Christ would never come, for all men will never be saved. In the second place, because the bringing to repentance is the work of God Himself which He performs only in the elect. Hence He is not willing that all men should be saved. And, thirdly, this is not in harmony with the rest of the text. For, surely, in the first part of the text, by the pronoun "us" refers to the church, to the elect. Hence, we must read the last part of the text in this way: not willing that any of us, of the church, of the elect, should perish, but that all of the church, the elect, should come to repentance. But, as I said, in this text there is no well-meant offer, or any offer whatsoever.

H.H.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Kingdom of the Beast

Revelation 17:15-18

The church and the worldly state have allied themselves, in the first place. The one supports the other, and the other directs and aids the one. Where the one goes, the other follows. For the beast carries the woman, which at least also seems to imply that after all the beast employs the woman for his own purpose and carries her whithersoever he will, though in turn he is the strength and support of the woman, and she owes it to the beast that she is decked with jewels and precious stones and arrayed in purple. However this may be, the fact that the woman is riding or sitting upon the beast means to show intimate union between church and worldly government, shows that they have united in character, united in purpose, united in aim and effort, and that together they strive to realize a common aim. The church stands here in an illegal, wrong relation to the power of the world, is employed by the latter, fulfills its purpose, and therefore loses her true character. This idea is emphasized by the fact that the woman is directly called the harlot. She is the harlot in a two-fold sense. In the first place, she is that because she allows herself to be the whore of the kings of the world, with which the great of the world can do as they please, on the which they can satisfy all their desire. But, in the second place, she is also the great whore because she is the mother of abominations, and makes all the inhabitants of the world drunken with the wine of her fornications. And therefore we obtain the two-fold picture, that, on the one hand, the instituted church allows herself to be employed by the world-power, and, on the other hand, that she leads all the individual inhabitants of the earth to follow her in this and to serve the purpose of the beast.

But even thus we cannot be satisfied, but we must ask the concrete question: in what does this harlotry of the church consist? What is the illegality of the relation between the two? And then it will be necessary to determine, in the first place, what would be the right relation, and what is the character and purpose of each, the church and the state, in the world? Just as you must determine of literal harlotry by first determining the proper relation of man and woman, so also we must come to a true understanding of the harlotry of the church with the worldly power by ascertaining, first of all, what is the right relation between the two. What is the state? What is instituted government, according to the Word of God? Of this we find a very clear description in Rom. 13:1-14: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher

powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Hence, it is plain that:

1. The state is an institution of God. It is ordained by Him to bear the sword power, to punish evil-doers and to protect the good.

2. The state is a temporal institution, to maintain law and order in the midst of a corrupt world.

3. The God-given instrument it employs is not spiritual but material, the power of the sword, and all this implies. It is not the power of a certain common grace, but the power of the sword. That, in our view, is the purpose of government. And that is the Scriptural conception. To it we are in subjection, of course. And for conscience's sake the Christian can never become a rebel or even a traitor in time of war or peace, unless that state, that government, should demand of him that he would act contrary to the will of God.

What, however, is the church? It is an entirely different institution. It is the manifestation of the body of Christ on earth, and represents the authority of Christ in the world. It is the result, the product, the manifestation, of the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Through it it becomes possible for the people of God to manifest themselves as the body of Christ, worship and glorify their God and King, and reveal His glory in the midst of the world. Its purpose is two-fold. In the first place, it is the establishment and upbuilding of the saints in Christ Jesus, so that they may come to a fuller and clearer knowledge and stronger faith of the grace that is in Christ. And, in the second place, it is the propagation of the gospel of the kingdom in every land. And therefore, its task is definitely circumscribed. She does not receive her instructions from the worldly power. The latter cannot tell her what to believe and to confess and how to worship, has no authority to define the contents of the message she must bring in the church and in all the world. In all this she acknowledges no other authority than that of Jesus Christ and the Word of her God. She is different from the state in that she employs no earthly or physical power, but only the spiritual instrument of the Word and the reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit. She is eternal, not destined to disappear, but to exist forever when her King shall come to deliver her. And her task is not to make the world better, but simply to aim at the rooting out of sin and its power through the Word and the Spirit. And the relation between her and the state is essentially such that the worldly power exists for her sake, namely, to make the development of the

people of God possible in the world. And therefore, each has its own sphere. The church represents the power of the eternal kingdom, can be satisfied with nothing less than the complete deliverance from sin, and looks for the eternal kingdom of God to come. The instituted government, however, represents a temporal power, is ordained in order to handle the sword power and to punish the evil-doer, to protect the righteous, and to maintain order until God shall have completed His own, eternal kingdom.

When now does the wrong relation ensue between the two? And when does the worldly power become the beast, and the church the harlot? This comes about when, in the first place, the state, the power of the world, presumes to represent the development of the kingdom of Christ, and thus claims to be essentially the eternal kingdom itself. In that case it will deny its original character, refuse to be satisfied with being a punishing power upon evil and a maintainer of public order, and strive for worldwide power, in order that through her agency the world may become the kingdom of God. It will conceive of the possibility to root out evil and establish real righteousness and peace by main power, by the power of the law and by the action of the sword. And it will tell you that this is the kingdom of Christ that was to come. Of course you understand that this is not true and that this can never be. The state does not exist on the basis of the atoning blood of Christ directly. It is not destined to be eternal. It is not purposed to become the main and eternal kingdom. Its purpose is temporal, not eternal. Its power is auxiliary, not chief. And therefore, as soon as the state through its power aims at establishing the eternal kingdom, a kingdom of righteousness and peace and justice, without the spiritual means of the Word and the blood of Christ, it becomes the antichristian kingdom. It becomes the beast. Naturally, with that aim the children of God, the true church, will come into conflict. For the latter will deny that it is the purpose of the state to develop into the eternal kingdom of God and will maintain that this can only lead to the establishment of the show-kingdom of Antichrist. But this will only lead to persecution on the part of the world-power. That world-power will try to get control of all things—of art and science and commerce and industry, but also of religion and worship, and ultimately dictate what God we shall worship and how we must worship Him. There you have the antichristian beast. And the church becomes the harlot, the apostate church, when she becomes of one mind with the beast. Negatively, she will begin by admitting that the blood of Christ is not necessary for the establishment of the kingdom of God. She will deny that the Holy Spirit only can truly make children of the kingdom. She will abandon the name of Jesus and the Word of God, and seek her hope in this dispensation and in this world. And positively, she will help in forming that great state for which also the world-power strives. She will offer her full services to the state, give her most hearty support to any movement that comes along, and be busy in the things of this world instead of in

the things of the eternal kingdom of Christ. Concretely speaking, she will no more preach on sin and total depravity. She will no more teach the necessity of personal regeneration and the atoning blood of Christ, but be full of messages that pertain only to this world. She will preach on the great topics of war and peace, on the betterment of humanity through all kinds of legislation, on prohibition and woman suffrage, on hygiene and health ordinances, on wages and labor, on business and industry. And she will try to picture before the minds of her members how through all these things the great and glorious kingdom of God shall come in the earth. Thus she has abandoned her true, her spiritual, her eternal character, and become the great harlot.

Now then, what shall become of this harlot, in the first place? What shall be the end of her harlotry? Simply this, that she shall ultimately cease to exist as a separate institution. She shall be great and glorious for a time. She shall score great victories evidently. For, in the first place, the text tells us that she is sitting upon many waters. Twice this is mentioned in the text. Already in our passage the angel explains that this symbol refers to peoples and nations and tongues and multitudes. Of course, this is not in conflict with her being seated on the beast. For the beast evidently comprises many peoples. And therefore by sitting on the beast the harlot naturally sits on many peoples. But in this figure, as well as in the statement that she made the inhabitants of the earth drunken with the wine of her fornications, the idea is expressed that she influences and fascinates the minds of many, of a great multitude. She preaches a religion that can be adopted by the world; and therefore her victory is great. And, in the second place, she scores great victories from the side of the world-power. It is no doubt through the power of the beast that she is decked with pearls and arrayed in purple and that she is great and glorious. For a time she is victorious as an institution, enjoys the favor of the world, and succeeds to persecute the true saints of Christ, that refuse to join her harlotry. It is after all through her influence that the true church is ultimately a castaway, an object of shame and mockery.

But this is not her end. The text plainly tells us that the same kings and the same beast whose favorite pet she was with all her harlotries will hate her and despise her and utterly destroy her, eat her flesh and burn her. Notice, in the first place, that there is something perfectly natural in this. Just as the whoremongers in a natural and literal sense ultimately hate the harlot that has been instrumental in the satisfaction of their lust, so also these kings and these beasts, when the apostate church as an institution shall have fulfilled all their desire, shall hate her and become envious and jealous of her power and glory. After all, what is the use and the place of the church as an institution when the vague and general religion of Antichrist shall prevail? What is the use of an established form of worship in an established church? Just as the church as an institution shall disappear when the kingdom of glory of our Lord shall have been completed, so

also shall the institution of the false church disappear when her work is finished and she has been instrumental in preparing the religion of Antichrist. At any rate, the church shall be abolished. That is clear from the text. Not her apostate spirit shall be destroyed, but her body, her manifestation, shall come to an end. It makes no difference to us now how this shall be realized. Certain it is that the beast shall do away with the institution of the church that has served his purpose. And then shall the kingdom be realized. Then all shall be blended, and the institution even of the church shall be no more. The very shadow of Christ shall have been obliterated from the earth. And all that remains in the world is the world-power, the antichristian kingdom. The woman as to her form shall have disappeared. But essentially her apostate spirit shall be realized in the worship of the image of the beast. And that same woman, spiritually realized in the kingdom of Antichrist from its religious point of view, shall reappear in Babylon, the great center of the world-power that is to come. From there she shall rule over the hearts and minds of great and small and of the inhabitants of the world. The appearance of the harlot has vanished. She now exists centrally as the great city, Babylon, the capital of the kingdom of Antichrist.

Two remarks we wish to make in application. In the first place, notice that God controls all these developments through Jesus Christ. It is God, so we read, that gives it into the heart of these kings and of the beast to hate the harlot and to come to oneness of mind. God, then, controls all things. Christ reigns. There is nothing to fear. When the institution of the apostate church shall be abolished, the same shall be true of the true church. Public worship then for us belongs to the past. It shall be the reign of the man of sin. But never fear. God reigns! He has given it in the heart of the kings to hate the harlot. His will must be done; and all things work together for good to them that love Him. In the second place, the repetition of the practical admonition is also now in order: "Go ye out from her, my people, and have no fellowship with her sins, that ye may not partake of her judgment." Even as the institution of the harlot church, so shall Babylon also fall. And only the New Jerusalem shall ultimately prevail. Watch, therefore, that ye fall not into temptation.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Fall of Babylon

Revelation 18 (See your Bible)

We devoted some time to the discussion of Babylon the Great, the Mystery, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth. First we discussed Babylon as such. We found that she is both a woman-harlot and a city. As woman she is no doubt a symbol of the church on earth as an institution for the building up of the saints and for the propagation of the gospel of the kingdom. As harlot, however, she is the apostate church, who has denied her true

character, forsaken her rightful husband, Jesus Christ, and surrendered herself to be employed as an instrument of the world-power and of Antichrist. And as a city her essential character is revealed. For even as the true church of Christ shall ultimately reveal itself as the New Jerusalem, so the counterfeit church shall reveal itself as the counterfeit Jerusalem, that is, Babylon.

Secondly, we also discussed the beast on whom the woman-harlot was found sitting. And we found that in it a picture is presented to our view of the world-power in its historical development, as well as in its ultimate formation. Seven kingdoms shall come before the world-power, as the eighth, shall be able to come to its realization and consummation. With the seventh all the then-existing kings shall combined their power; and they all shall give it to the beast, that is, the kingdom of Antichrist.

That beast shall make war with the Christ and His saints, but shall be overthrown by them; and Christ shall have the victory.

In the third place, we discussed the judgment of the great whore, the harlot-woman. We found that her harlotry consisted in an illegal relation in which she, as church, stands to the world-power. She is called to be the manifestation of the body of Christ in the world, and she gives herself to be the body of the beast. She is called to build the saints in the most holy faith, and she makes all the inhabitants of the earth drunk with the wine of her fornications. She is called to be the army of an eternal kingdom, based on the atoning blood of the Savior; and she labors for the establishment of a temporal kingdom of Antichrist that has no part with the blood of Christ Jesus and is doomed to destruction. She is called to employ the spiritual means of the Word and of the sacraments; and instead she abandons the truth of the Word of God and seeks refuge in outward means and external instruments to establish the promised kingdom. She is the harlot, the apostate woman, that labors for the beast instead of for the kingdom of Christ. And we found also that her judgment as harlot is certain: she will ultimately disappear as an institution, because her very lovers shall hate her. The kings that committed fornication with her shall aim at her destruction. The very appearance of the church in this dispensation shall be annoying, nauseating, to them; and therefore they shall obliterate her from the face of the earth. Then the woman as harlot shall exist no more. The instituted church has come to the end of her existence. But she shall reappear as a city whose mystical name is Babylon. For in Babylon, the center and heart of the antichristian kingdom, the spirit of that same woman that once appeared as the apostate church shall reign supreme.

In the chapter we are now approaching, chapter 18, however, the destruction of that great city is portrayed in highly descriptive and symbolic language. It is impossible to divide the chapter, for evidently all the material found here belongs together, elaborates upon one and the same theme, concentrates itself around the same central thought. And that

central thought of the chapter is the fall of Babylon. And therefore this we must now discuss.

It cannot escape our attention that purposely the text gives us once more a description of Babylon, this time of her existence as a city. Even as in the end we are presented with an elaborate description of the New Jerusalem, its beauty and glory and blessedness, so we are also given a picture of the highest attainment of the world-power and of the apostate church as it is pictured in the city of Babylon. But the difference is that while Jerusalem's description is connected with her final and absolute glory and victory over all enemies, the elaborate description of Babylon is connected with its ultimate destruction. But in order to understand the significance of the downfall of Babylon, it will be necessary that we obtain a glimpse of her real importance, of her greatness and riches, of her influence and control of all the matters of the world. It makes no difference whether we accept the view that Babylon shall be a real city, or whether we are inclined to believe that this element belongs to the symbolism of the picture, certain it remains that in the fall of Babylon we meet with the fall of all human labor and attainment, the fall of the entire structure of the antichristian kingdom.

In the first place, then, Babylon is plainly pictured as the center of the antichristian kingdom from a royal and legislative point of view. In the pride of her heart she exclaims herself: "I sit a queen, and shall see no mourning!" She sits, therefore, upon many waters as a queen. Babylon is the royal city. From Babylon goes forth the law over many nations and tongues and tribes and multitudes. There is the judicial wisdom of the kingdom. From there the laws are issued. There resides the executive power. If I may for a moment accept that the head of that kingdom shall be a person, the very culmination of antichristian principle, he lives in Babylon, and from Babylon he reigns. There is the power that controls all things, that keeps order, that regulates commerce and industry, that regulates science and art and religion, that establishes the form of worship for the beast. This is also plain from the repeated expression that "the kings of the earth committed fornication with her and lived deliciously with her." Babylon was the glory of the kings of the earth, their stronghold and center. In Babylon the ten kings of the earth, of the great alliance with the beast, came together to make their plans for the advancement of their cause and kingdom and for their war against the Christ and against His saints. In a word, Babylon appears as the royal center, as the throne of Antichrist. She is the center of all law and rule for the entire world; and all the world obeys her will. Without Babylon the antichristian kingdom is inconceivable even as Germany is inconceivable without Berlin, France without Paris, England without London. She is of central significance for all the kingdom.

In the second place, we may also notice that Babylon is pictured in the text as being the heart and center of all the commerce in the world, the home of industry and art. Not

merely a city among others is Babylon, but *the* city, the only city that is a center of business and industry and art and science, from whence these are controlled over the entire world and without which the life of industry and commerce is gone. Such a city is Babylon, according to the chapter we are now discussing. Plain this is from the description of the weeping and wailing merchants, who stand afar off and are pictured as beholding her destruction with fear and anguish. Babylon is the merchant of this world. She sells every conceivable article; and if she cannot sell, all the commerce and business of the world is at a standstill. Babylon sells gold and silver and precious stones and pearls. She is the only money-market in the world. Babylon sells fine linen and purple and scarlet, matters of necessity and luxury. Babylon controls the sale of all the products of industry. She it is who sells vessels of thyine wood, of ivory, and most precious wood, of brass and iron, and marble. On her market we find the products of all parts of the world: the spices of tropical zones, the wine and the oil of more moderate climate, cinnamon and incense and ointment and frankincense — these all must be bought within her walls. Babylon controls all the necessities of life. For they are her merchants that have a monopoly of fine flour and wheat, of cattle and sheep and horses and chariots. Yea, Babylon controls the power of universal labor. For her merchants sell the bodies and souls of men. Babylon controls the luxuries of the world. For she is decked with purple and gold; and the luscious fruits and dainty things are found within her borders. Still more, Babylon also controls every craft. For the angel that symbolizes the fall of Babylon by casting a large stone into the sea announces that no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more in her, and that the sound of the millstone is silenced within her walls forever. She is the mother of music and fine arts, of pipers and trumpeters, of the invention of many a thing of convenience and luxury. She is the center of joy, the mistress of life, in the kingdom of Antichrist. Without her there is no commerce: for the merchants shall wail because no one can buy their merchandise any more after the destruction of Babylon. Without her there is neither art nor science nor industry conceivable. She is, in one word, the heart and center of the business and life of all the world.

In the third place, she is pictured as a luxurious and wicked city. The kings of the earth commit fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth wax rich by the power of her wantonness, vs. 3. Luscious fruits and dainty things, whatever is nice and pleasant to the taste, are found in her, vs. 14. She is arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, vs. 16. Within her walls is heard the voice of harpers and minstrels, of flute-players and trumpeters the joyful voice of the bridegroom and the bride, vss. 22, 23. She is, therefore, a city filled to overflowing with joy and abundance. There is the culmination of all that human ingenuity could possibly invent for the joy and bliss and ease and comfort of man. H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Calling of Moses

And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage . . .

And . . . God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I . . .

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows . . .

Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

Exodus 3:23; 4:4, 7, 10

Moses had been rejected by the children of Israel. They had refused to receive him as a brother in the faith. They did not want him as a prince and ruler to lead them out of the bondage of Egypt. For many generations they had been living in the land of Egypt. The riches of Egypt were many, and the Israelites had enjoyed them to the full. They had learned to love the bounties that could always be obtained, the fish, the onions and melons, the garlic and leeks. At the same time the land of Canaan had lost its attachment for them. It seemed distant and far away. They seldom thought of it anymore. That their fathers had come from that land no longer seemed very important. The thought that they someday might return to Canaan gave them little joy. Indeed, in recent years the situation in Egypt had been changing. The former kindness of the Egyptians had turned to hatred. The joys of Egypt had been curtailed by oppression and persecution. Bitter bondage was now their part, with arduous labor in brick, and in mortar, and in all manner of service in the field. The very lives of their new born children had been threatened again and again. But still their hope endured. Maybe something would happen to mollify the hatred of Pharaoh. If the Egyptians could be soothed, then they could settle down to enjoy once again the luxuries of Egypt which they had learned to love. When Moses appeared and slew an Egyptian, thereby clearly offering to lead them in rebellion against their masters, it left them cold and even angry. They did not want trouble and fighting; they wanted peace. They wanted to soothe their masters, not incite them. With harsh words and scornful looks they drove Moses away. Dutifully they reported his misdeed to the overseers. Moses was forced to flee for his life toward the wilderness of Midian soon to be forgotten by all but a few.

The years passed by. The children of Israel looked for Pharaoh's anger to abate; but it did not. They tried to pacify him, but could not. The future only continued to look more dark. Finally Pharaoh died, and the hopes of Israel

revived. Perhaps the new Pharaoh would be different; maybe he would be more kind. But alas, all of their fondest dreams were in vain. Grievous oppression continued to be their part, and if anything, it was heavier than before. At last Israel's confidence in Egypt and its people began to waver and die. Anticipation gave way to despair, and there arose from their hearts a bitter sigh. Only then did they think to remember the true source of their strength in the past. They were a wretched people. Nearly eighty years of oppression had passed during which Israel had pinned its hopes on the world and its men. Only when all had failed did they remember to turn to their God. It was a wonder of divine grace that "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them."

* * * *

It was a lone shepherd who led his small flock to the backside of the wilderness of Midian. The way had been rough and barren, but here on the slopes of Horeb green pastures were sure to be found. The sheep were in good hands. The man's words were few, and his appearance was crude; but his actions were gentle, and his eyes reflected a heart that had found peace. To look at him one could hardly suspect that once his feet had trod the royal courts of Egypt, that his feats of learning had won great acclaim by his teachers, that his mind had devised plans of great and impressive works, that his dreams had been to lead a great nation hundreds of thousands strong. That had been long ago and the way of life he had now learned was quite different. True, the dreams and ambitions of youth had died slowly, and often painfully; but die they had. The mannerisms of the court had disappeared, and in their place had come the simpler virtues of gentleness, kindness, patience, meekness and childlike trust in his God. The one great joy that remained to him was simply to pray and worship the Lord, and to meditate upon His Word. What good was it all? What was this man accomplishing alone in this barren wilderness? What was becoming of all his preparation and education? Where was his challenge? What was he doing for God? The world could hardly be expected to recognize it, the man hardly realized it himself, but through those years in the wilderness he had grown immensely in stature before God. The day would come when divine inspiration would cause it to be written that "the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." What greater virtue could be ascribed to a child of God? The lesson of Midian exceeded by far all that he had learned in the greatest schools of the world.

As the shepherd made his way up the slopes of Horeb, there was a purpose guiding his life of which he was quite unaware. The invisible hand of God's providence was leading him toward a certain bush that grew there among the mountain crags. Suddenly he saw it. There stood before him

a bush, a bush enveloped in flames, a bush filled with fire, but still it was not consumed. His curiosity aroused, he turned to examine the bush more closely. And then from the bush there came the voice, "Moses, Moses," and with faltering lips he answered back, "Here am I." The bush was chosen as a symbol of Israel in its lowly state of bondage. In the bush was the fire of God's presence, purging His people through suffering, but not consuming them. This Moses did not yet realize, but the voice went on to instruct him. "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. I am the God of thy father the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Awed and afraid, Moses hid his face. Who was he to look upon God?

The voice continued. "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Can we begin to imagine with what depth of feeling these words stirred the heart of Moses. Here was the hope and longing of all his life promised by the very voice of the angel of God's presence. Already as a child sitting upon his mother's knee he had heard of God's promise that Israel would be delivered from the bondage of Egypt, and he had looked forward to it with childlike eagerness and anticipation. All during his youth as he had applied himself with diligence to study and learning, it had been in the expectation that what he learned could be used in the service of God's people in their deliverance and settling in the promised land. Through the emerging discretion of his young adulthood, his every thought and ambition had been dominated by the determination to work for the deliverance of the people of God. Even during the forty long years of his banishment in Midian, he had ceased not to pray in the confidence that God would be faithful to His promises. Now the voice of God's angel was telling him; the time had come.

And there was more. Not only would Moses witness and take part in the deliverance, he was the one through whom God would work to bring it to pass. Did not all of the old dreams and ambitions, which only after a hard and painful struggle had subsided from his mind, suddenly surge up again within him? He was to stand upon the fore. All of his years of training and preparation were not without purpose after all. The dreams of his youth were to be realized. Yet, somehow, these old dreams and ambitions did not seem to have the appeal for him that they had had in

former years. Was it perhaps because of the memories that came back so forcibly to him along with these thoughts of the past? He remembered the time that he had tried. The bitter words, the hate-filled looks, the foolishness of having tried to establish himself by his own words and works, these memories were painful for Moses even to recall. How could he ever go and try again? But even more his whole outlook on life had changed. Then he had thought himself capable; now he knew that he was not. Moses rejoiced at God's promise of deliverance for Israel, but his joy was mingled with dismay at the very suggestion that it was through him that it was to be wrought. He answered back, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

God's answer to Moses was kind and gentle. "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." It was this which would make all of the difference. Before Moses had tried to become the leader over Israel by acting on his own. Thus he had been bound to failure. By working apart from the command of God he had been opposing the cause of the Lord and not aiding it. But now God would be with him. God would give to him strength and authority. There was no longer any real reason why Moses should be afraid.

But the fear of Moses was set very deep, and it was not easily dismissed. Through the long years in the wilderness he had learned to repudiate all of his dreams of leadership. Only with flushes of shame did he remember his former efforts. It hurt and pained him to remember those cutting words of rejection, "Who made thee a prince and judge over us?" How could he ever present himself to Israel again? Moses voiced his objection. "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?" To what could he possibly appeal to prove to them that his act was not again mere presumption?

The answer of God to Moses must rank among the greatest of the self-revelations that God has made to His people in time. "I AM THAT I AM: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." I AM THAT I AM, this is God's name in a most unique sense of the word. No one else can possibly have this name, for everyone else is only that which God has determined him to be. Only God is the absolutely self-determining one. He alone determines what He alone shall be at every moment of time and throughout all eternity. He alone does only and always what He Himself has determined that He shall do. Thus He can

(Continued on page 165)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Matthew 1:18-25

It has been correctly observed by expositors of Holy Writ that the Gospel of Matthew is written for the believers who were once under the law of the Old Testament, in the days of the types and shadows, but who are now believers in Christ Jesus; that Matthew consequently is writing in this entire Gospel from the viewpoint that in Christ the entire Old Testament promises, covenants, types and shadows are fulfilled.

This viewpoint explains the fact that when Matthew delineates upon the "Genesis," the "beginning" of Jesus Christ, he picks up this beginning with the patriarch Abraham. While Luke traces the genealogical line of Christ back from Christ to Adam, Matthew traces the line forward from Abraham to Christ. The line, as given in Matthew 1:1-16, is such that it is from Abraham to David, the king; from David to the Babylonian captivity; and from the Babylonian captivity to the coming of Christ.

And this is interpreted by Matthew in Chapter 1 verse 17 as follows: "Now all the generation from Abraham unto David are fourteen generations, and from David unto the Babylonian captivity are fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian captivity unto the birth of Christ are fourteen generations." It is very evident that, in order to arrive at this figure, Matthew must omit some names from the lists of the successive generations. And this can be understood when we notice that Matthew is tracing the rise, the high-point of Jesse's house, and its descent to a sawed-off trunk of Jesse's tree. For Abraham is blessed in the Seed which is to come, that is in him who did not come from the will of man, nor from the will of blood, but who is born by the will of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born from the virgin Mary!

That the birth of the Seed, of David's Son and Lord, is different from the conception and birth of every other child which is born to man is foretold by the prophet Isaiah: "For, behold, a virgin shall conceive, and she shall bear a son . . ."

And this entirely different birth of the Christ is due to the fact that the "beginning" of Jesus Christ is in a class all by itself. Hence Matthew writes: "The birth (genesis) of Jesus Christ was *thus*." The *manner* of the beginning of Jesus Christ, his entire coming into the flesh was in a class and *mode* all by itself.

And it raised peculiar problems; it gave a *problem* to Joseph. Fact is that Jesus was conceived in Mary, conceived by the Holy Ghost, apart from a man, as the only exception to the *universal* rule. Never before or afterwards has a child been conceived in the womb of a woman without the

man. And since this was an exception it raised a problem which could only be received by faith; only by faith could Joseph be reconciled to Mary's condition.

Let us not forget that, according to the Bible, Mary was espoused to a man named Joseph. Joseph, too, was of the house of David. He is called "Joseph, thou son of David," in verse 20. However, Joseph is not a son in the royal line. He is placed in this line by Matthew as the father "so-called" (Luke 3:23). He adopted Jesus, Mary's Son. It seems that Joseph marries Mary since he is the nearest kinsman in the line. However, Mary is the daughter royal from David's house. Otherwise Jesus is not out of David as far as the flesh is concerned, the Son royal to sit upon David's throne. The genealogies in Matthew and Luke are both of Mary, I hold. The line in Luke from Mary's mother's side over Nathan, David's son, and the one in Matthew over Mary's father, Jacob, from Solomon.

Such was this Joseph. And we ought not to overlook the fact that no better and more understanding father could have been found. God must have moved Joseph's heart in a very wonderful way by His Spirit and grace.

It really required grace of God for Joseph to be reconciled to the situation which God created in this man's life and that in the relationship of him to his espoused wife.

For "before they came together" Mary is found with child!

And that created a moral and spiritual problem. There were, as far as the people of Nazareth were concerned, only two alternatives left them to explain this "case" of Mary. Either she and Joseph had had pre-marital co-habitation, they were guilty of fornication; or Joseph was innocent, and Mary was guilty, virtually, of adultery with another man! Thus the tongues would wag. And that, from a human standpoint, very understandably! And from Joseph's standpoint there was really only one alternative. Since, in his heart and conscience he was free and innocent, there could only be the stark reality that Mary had played the harlot.

And this was too painful for Joseph. His confidence in Mary was greatly shaken. What every man so jealously desires, to have a chaste and innocent virgin to wife, here was made impossible. If he married Mary he would needs have to be father to the child from another man!

On the other hand there was Mary's account. Was it factual, or was it an impossible and preposterous story? Never had it been heard that a woman conceived without a man. And, lo, Mary told him in all truthfulness of the visit by the angel Gabriel some three or more months before. She undoubtedly told him of the angel's words, of how she had said: "I know not a man" and how Gabriel had told her that "the Holy Ghost would come upon her, that the power of the Highest would overshadow her and that which was to be born of her, that Holy thing, would be called God's Son!"

If Zacharias' faith was severely put to the test in the news that they were to have their son in their old age, surely here was something far more taxing. At least Joseph had not been visited by an angel as had been Zacharias in the temple. Besides, there was a "precedent" in the case of Zacharias in the birth of John from the barren and aged Elizabeth. There was the case, the classic case, of Abraham and Sarah. But always there was a man, be it then a quickened and rejuvenated man! But Joseph had nothing by way of precedent.

And consequently Joseph does what a "just man" will do. He will, according to the law, put Mary away. He will, in effect, divorce her; give her a writing of divorcement. The text says that he would do this "privily"! He would do this without citing the grounds of adultery. Thus he thinks of it and purposes it in his mind. He has come upon the *most human* solution to this knotty problem. He will try to cut the Gordian knot. He will put her away privily and thus he will leave the real "grounds" for his conduct an open question. The question whether Mary alone is to blame and then some other man, or whether Joseph is to blame for this, the people in Nazareth will needs have to decipher for themselves. If he puts Mary away privily then a measure of the reproach will fall upon Joseph, and Mary will at least be the object of some leniency since the people will opine that Joseph had made her the "innocent" victim of his own possibly evil conduct.

Thus the pendulum swings between jealousy and loyalty to Mary!!

And while, in weariness, he fell asleep, behold, the angel of the Lord makes the first of his four visits to Joseph in a dream!

What a beautiful address: "Joseph, thou son of David," be not afraid to take Mary to wife. For what Mary told you, Joseph, that is factual. She told you that the "Holy Ghost had come upon her, that the power of the Highest had overshadowed her" and that the child would be "great" and would sit upon the throne of your father David, and be called the "Son of God."

Incredulous as that may have sounded in your ears, and a fact without precedent in all the history of the world, that is nonetheless the truth, Joseph. For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And, what is more, Joseph, you are to take Mary to wife and this child to be thy "Son." He is to be called Jesus. And that name you are to give him at the occasion of his circumcision upon the eighth day. You are to give him the name which is above every name. Thou shall call his name JESUS!!

You are to see in this son of Mary your son by adoption, the well-beloved Son of God, in whom is all God's good-pleasure. For here where all possibility is gone for man to raise up seed to sit upon David's throne, since you are not

in the royal line, God himself has come, without the will of man, to bring forth the Seed, which is Christ. Among all the sons of Jesse, there is none like him. He is not only to be David's son, but he is also David's LORD!

He it is that shall save his people from their sins!

Other kings delivered Israel from the hands of the surrounding nations. But none were able to make the people themselves free from sin, so that in the just judgment of God they would no more be delivered into the hand of the enemies. But this one, this Son will be a King. He will be the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace!

When this child is born then you must name him JESUS.

He is Jehovah God. He is the eternal God. He is God in the flesh. He is the only hope of Israel; he is the root of David, the Lion out of Judah's tribe and to him shall the gathering of the people be. Only in him does Israel, as nation, have significance and purpose. Only in him does the line from Abraham through David have a consummation, so that no more sons need to be born. He will sit upon the throne forever! After he has served the counsel of God he will not need to be "gathered to his people" and see corruption, but he will go to heaven at God's right hand to live and pray as the great king-priest.

Believe this, Joseph!

He will save all his people. The entire church, both Jews and Gentiles, will he save. He will save them from their sins. He will pay the guilt and debt of sin. He will be the glory of Israel and light of the nations.

And Joseph believed and obeyed.

He took Mary to wife and shared her secret in faith!

He called the little babe's name: JESUS!

Why did this all thus come to pass? The answer is that this is the fulfilment of what Jehovah spake through Isaiah to king Ahaz when the latter was given a sign, that upon David's royal throne there would be no lack of an heir. The royal line had run out of heirs to the throne, humanly speaking. There "was no man." But now God does the impossible. And this can and need happen once and only once. A virgin shall conceive and bear a son. That is the "sign." It is one all in its own class. And therefore Joseph's heart can rest assured. He need not fear to take Mary to wife. He need not be ashamed of this child. Blessed is he who is not offended in him!

In him the triad of fourteen generations find their climax and fulfillment. God's covenant is established in him; the promise is fulfilled in this Son of Mary, Son of God.

Presently she gives birth to her firstborn Son and lays him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn.

Immanuel, God with us.

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Children of Our Age

(3)

"Those were the good old days!"

Men speak that way sometimes and refer to various things which, in their opinion, were better than the things of today. Not infrequently however this sentiment is expressed also in regard to the conduct of men and particularly in regard to the conduct of children. Our age speaks much of juvenile delinquency and of a "teen age problem." And in reference to the conduct and behaviour of the youth of our day the thought is often expressed that it was much better in the olden times. Children were not so bold. They dared not perform those actions that today they practice without a blush or sign of remorse or shame. And many a parent has caught himself saying to his child, "When we were children, we did not dare to do such things." Then again the remark will be made, "What is this generation coming to anyway?" Back of all this is the undeniable belief of man that there is a development of sin and that each age is followed by a more evil age.

You say, It simply looks that way?

Indeed we do forget so quickly the sins of our youth. And it is not at all difficult to treat our children as though they were adults. We can exact of them that which a child cannot do and then come to the conclusion that our children are not as self-reliant and resourceful as we were in our childhood, forgetting that we did these things at a much later age and by far more gradual steps. We do not have the same kinds of sins as those we had when we were children. Naughty tricks and evil works which we enjoyed in our childhood days no longer give us that same thrill; and we apply this change of pleasure to the days of our children and seem not to be able to remember that when we were young we DID do those things ourselves. We forget also that our children live in another age with different circumstances, when sins are much closer at hand and easier to reach than in our day. Therefore we quickly cry of a generation that is so much more evil than the age when we were children.

Well, far be it from us to say anything else. This age in which we live IS far more evil than the age of our youth, and the present generation also has reached a degree of sin that the former age did not know. All the statistics that are released will show you that. Crime and vice have reached astounding proportions. Teenagers do dare to do things that adults would hesitate to do. Children do without a trace of shame or even of acknowledgement of wrong perpetrate the most terrible crimes. Not only is there a tremen-

dous increase in the number of crimes and evil performed today, but the forms of wickedness also have multiplied.

Such has been the undeniable course of history. From that original sin of Adam the world rushed through the murder of Cain and of Lamech to all the wickedness that soon called for the judgment of the Flood. Soon enough the state of the world became such that we read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. *Every* imagination . . . *only* evil *continually*." What an awful picture of that human race that had so shortly before stood in righteousness and holiness before God in Paradise! True, in that day men lived to be nine hundred years old before they died. They lived longer than we do, and they were able to develop in their sins to a very marked degree before they died. To many generations they had the opportunity to teach their devilishness. But do not forget that today we have much better means of transportation and communication. We have our magazines and newspapers, our radio and television to spread the evil works of men and to teach others ways of violence and wickedness. And the root of sin that was sown in Paradise must needs bring forth more and more fruit. For it is not dead but very much alive. The rotten spot in the apple does not stay confined to its little area but soon spreads and envelopes the whole apple. The disease germ in your body is either overcome by the white corpuscles in your blood or else multiplies and brings you low with disease. So it is with the corruption that entered into man when he fell in Paradise. Who would dare to deny that there is much more sin and many more types of sin in the world today than those Adam committed in Paradise or after being driven out because of his sin? Sin is not dying off. Sin is very much alive and growing at a tremendous speed.

Trace, if you will, the history of Israel. Trace it in the ten tribes who departed through the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin. Did it stop at the worshipping of golden calves which were said to represent Jehovah Who brought them up out of the land of Egypt? Of course it did not. It developed into the worship of all the gods of the heathen round about them. It developed until God was ready to cast them out of the promised land and into captivity from which they never returned. No different was it with the two tribes who followed David and his sons. Soon enough the wickedness of the ten tribes spread over the border and was gladly received by the two tribes; and it went from bad to worse until this kingdom also was ready for exile into Babylon.

We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that it is any otherwise today. Paul warns Timothy and us that perilous times are coming when men shall manifest themselves clearly as lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. II Timothy 3:1-5. Paul sees no restraining grace of God in the hearts of the reprobate world, nor does he therefore see

a withdrawal of such a restraining grace in the latter days which accounts for these perilous times and the rising up of the antichrist. The Antichrist has been coming ever since the Fall. He does not suddenly begin to come. The awful form which he assumes in the days just before Christ's return will be a most powerful manifestation of sin and be the highest development of sin. For he is called in Scripture *the man of sin*, the man sin produces, II Thessalonians 2:1-4. And this is not something that comes all of a sudden out of a clear sky but rather by a steady, continuous development of sin. That is why John could say that now today and in his day—a time when according to some a certain restraining grace of God was upon the hearts of the reprobate without renewing them—there were many antichrists, I John 2:18. Nay, that Antichrist can come at the end of time only because throughout history sin has been developing in the hearts of men and in the works of their hands. No sooner had God destroyed the first world with the flood and purified it, and sin reappears. And if you please, we may even see a development of sin in the Church, for as we wrote last time, our flesh also is part of that ungodly world and not simply like unto it. According to our flesh we are that world and develop with that world in sin. Noah advanced into sin and Ham took over where he left off to establish it once again firmly on the new earth. Look about you today! Have these sins of Noah and of Ham been contained to the relatively small area of Noah's nakedness and Ham's filthy delight? Do we see more than such sins in the world today? Are our newspapers today merely filled with accounts of drunken men who expose themselves naked before the eyes of others? And are men hailed in court and fined for laughing at such shameful things? Is the world of today no more wicked than that? Come, come! Look again and explain all this harlotry, adultery, fornication, sexual freedom and corruption that you see every where today and even in the eyes of the world is a plague upon our land. The wild parties of not simply drunken men but of men and women, the immoral literature and photography, the lewd speech and filthy entertainment of the world of today all is the product of the development of sin that began with the sins of those who peopled the earth after the Flood. No, no grace of God has been restraining that sin in the hearts of the reprobate world. Sin develops, and as man invents new tools and means, he multiplies and magnifies the sins he is able to commit. There is one steady line of development of sin from the family of Noah till it culminates in the Antichrist.

And grasp the significance of that fact! All the corruption in the world, all the sins of today which have developed out of the sins of the past, all the sinners of today as they stand on the shoulders of the sinners in ages past and are able to reach new heights of deviltry and perversion, all these developed out of the flesh of those who were the Church saved by the water of the Flood. We may wish to label Ham as an reprobate, and many do for several reasons. Some do because they wish to retain the symbolic number seven and

wish to see only that symbolic number of seven souls saved in the ark. Others who read the text to declare that Ham was cursed rather than his son Canaan insist that therefore he could not be an elect child of God. Still others point to his sin, overlooking, of course, the fact that Noah sinned first and just as grievously as Ham, and in fact by his sin caused Ham to stumble—and on the basis of this sin insist that he was a reprobate. It really makes no difference, all this filth and corruption, all this drunkenness and sexual perversion of today comes not simply out of Ham's deed but out of Noah's. He introduced such filth and evil back into the new world. That Ham later on would expose the evil of his heart in some other way even if his father had not here given him the occasion so soon after the Flood, does not change the matter at all. The fact still remains that Noah was the one who introduced these sins back into the new world. Noah was the one who carried in his *flesh* all its lusts even while being saved by the flood and in the ark. And he still had them when he came forth from the ark.

Anyone still wish to argue the point that as far as our flesh is concerned we are not simply like the world but indeed are *part of that world*? Jesus once said, "Remember Lot's wife." Indeed, and to see the matter correctly, let us also remember drunken Noah. Let us do so to understand what filthy damnable sinners we are as far as our flesh is concerned. Let us do so in order to learn well our misery and need of the blood of Christ. Let us do so in order that we may fully appreciate the salvation in Christ. Let us do so in order that we may hold fast to the truth that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth—for Noah willed sin and ran in the way of sin—but of God Who showeth mercy. We, as far as our flesh is concerned, are children of the age in which we live, and the sins that the world commits, we commit, if not openly then surely in our hearts. The evil that we would not, that we do. And it is only because God sent His Son Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and Whose flesh was not tainted by our sin and gave the pure life as a sacrifice for our sins that we have salvation.

Let us then work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God Who worketh in us both to will and to do. That our flesh is part of the world and that it develops in sin with the world is not reason for complacency. We have also another life within us. We are children of our age, but by God's grace we are also children of God, children of the light. Let us so walk in His fear.

J.A.H.

A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

FORMAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

The Reformation was a protest against human authority, asserted the right of private conscience and judgment, and roused a spirit of criticism and free inquiry in all departments of knowledge. It allows, therefore, a much wider scope for the exercise of reason in religion than the Roman church, which requires unconditional submission to her infallible authority. It marks a real progress, but this progress is perfectly consistent with a belief in revelation on subjects which lie beyond the boundary of time and sense. What do we know of the creation, and the world of the future, except what God has chosen to reveal to us? Human reason can prove the possibility and probability of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, but not the certainty and necessity. It is reasonable, therefore, to believe in the supernatural on divine testimony, and it is unreasonable to reject it.

The Reformers used their reason and judgment very freely in their contest with church authority. Luther refused to recant in the crisis at Worms, unless convinced by testimonies of the Scriptures and "cogent arguments." For a while he was disposed to avail himself of the humanistic movement which was skeptical and rationalistic in its tendency, but his strong religious nature always retained the mastery. He felt as keenly as any modern Rationalist, the conflict between natural reason and the transcending mysteries of revelation. He was often tormented by doubts and even temptations to blasphemy, especially when suffering from physical infirmity. A comforter of others, he needed comfort himself and asked the prayers of friends to fortify him against the assaults of the evil spirit, with whom he had, as he thought, many a personal encounter. He confessed, in 1524, how glad he would have been five years before in his war with papal superstition, if Carlstadt could have convinced him that the Eucharist was nothing but bread and wine, and how strongly he was then inclined to that rationalistic view which would have given a death blow to transubstantiation and the mass. He felt that every article of his creed — the trinity in unity, the incarnation, the transmission of Adam's sin, the atonement by the blood of Christ, baptismal regeneration, the real presence, the renewal of the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the body — transcended human comprehension. In August 2, 1527, during the rag-

ing of the pestilence at Wittenberg, he wrote to Melancthon, who was absent at Jena: "For more than a week I have been tossed about in death and hell; so that, hurt in all my body, I still tremble in every limb. For having almost lost Christ, I was driven about by storms and tempests of despair and blasphemy against God. But God, moved by the prayers of the saints, begins to have pity upon me, and has drawn my soul out of the lowest hell. Do not cease to pray for me, as I do for you. I believe that this agony of mine pertains to others also."

In such trials and temptations he clung all the more mightily to the Scriptures and to faith which believes against reason and hopes against hope. "It is a quality of faith," he says in the explanation of his favorite Epistle to the Galatians, "that it wrings the neck of reason and strangles the beast, which else the whole world, with all creatures, could not strangle. But how? It holds to God's Word, and lets it be right and true, no matter how foolish and impossible it sounds. So did Abraham take his reason captive and slay it, inasmuch as he believed God's Word, wherein was promised him that from his unfruitful and as it were dead wife, Sarah, God would give him seed."

This and many similar passages clearly show the bent of Luther's mind. He knew the enemy, but overcame it; his faith triumphed over doubt. In his later years he became more and more a conservative churchman. He repudiated the mystic doctrine of the inner word and spirit, insisted on submission to the written letter of the Scriptures, even when it flatly contradicted reason. He traced the errors of the Zwickau prophets, the rebellious peasants, the Anabaptists, and the radical views of Carlstadt and Zwingli, without proper discrimination, to presumptuous inroads of the human reason into the domain of faith, and feared from them the overthrow of religion. He so far forgot his obligations to Erasmus as to call him an Epicurus, a Lucian, a doubter, and an atheist. Much as he valued reason as a precious gift of God in matters of this world, he abused it with unreasonable violence, when it dared to sit in judgment over matters of faith.

Certainly Luther must first be utterly divested of his faith, and the authorship of his sermons, catechisms and hymns must be called in question, before he can be appealed to as the father of Rationalism. He would have sacrificed his reason ten times rather than his faith.

Zwingli was the most clear-headed and rationalizing among the Reformers. He did not pass through the discipline of monasticism and mysticism, like Luther, but through the liberal culture of Erasmus. He had no mystic vein, but sound, sober, practical common sense. He always preferred the plainest sense of the Bible. He rejected the Catholic views on original sin, infant damnation and the corporeal presence in the eucharist, and held advanced opinions which shocked Luther and even Calvin. But he nevertheless reverently bowed before the divine authority of the

inspired Word of God and had no idea of setting reason over it. His dispute with Luther was simply a question of interpretation, and he had strong arguments for his exegesis, as even the best Lutheran commentators confess.

Calvin was the best theologian and exegete among the Reformers. He never abused reason, like Luther, but assigned it the office of an indispensable handmaid of revelation. He constructed with his logical genius the severest system of Protestant orthodoxy which shaped French, Dutch, English and American theology, and fortified it against Rationalism as well as against Romanism. His orthodoxy and discipline could not keep his own church in Geneva from becoming Socinian in the eighteenth century, but he is no more responsible for that than Luther for the Rationalism of Germany, or Rome for the infidelity of Voltaire. Upon the whole, the Reformed churches in England, Scotland and North America, have been far less invaded by Rationalism than Germany.

2. Let us now consider the application of the principle of free inquiry to the Bible.

The Bible, its origin, genuineness, integrity, aim, and all its circumstances and surroundings are proper subjects of investigation; for it is a human as well as a divine book, and has a history, like other literary productions. The extent of the Bible, moreover, or the canon, is not determined by the Bible itself or by inspiration, but by church authority or tradition, and was not fully agreed upon till the close of the fourth century, and even then only by provincial synods, not by any of the seven oecumenical councils. It was therefore justly open to reinvestigation.

The Church of Rome, at the Council of Trent, settled the canon, including the Apocrypha, but without any critical inquiry or definite theological principle; it simply confirmed the traditional usage, and pronounced an anathema on every one who does not receive all the books contained in the Latin Vulgate. She also checked the freedom of investigation by requiring conformity to a defective version and a unanimous consensus of the fathers, although such an exegetical consensus does not exist except in certain fundamental doctrines.

The Reformers re-opened the question of the **extent** of the canon, as they had a right to do, but without any idea of sweeping away the traditional belief or undermining the authority of the Word of God. On the contrary, from the fulness of their faith in the inspired Word, as contained in the Scriptures, they questioned the canonicity of a few books which seem to be lacking in sufficient evidence to entitle them to a place in the Bible. They simply revived, in a new shape and on doctrinal rather than historical grounds, the distinction made by the Hebrews and the ancient fathers between the canonical and apocryphal books of the Old Testament, and the Eusebian distinction between the *Homologumena* and *Antilegomena* of the New Testament, and claimed in both respects the freedom of the ante-Nicene church ("hom-

ologumena" refers to the books of the New Testament which were recognized as belonging to the canonical books; "antilegomena" refers to the books of the New Testament which at first were not recognized as belonging to the New Testament Canon—H.V.).

They added, moreover, to the external evidence, the more important internal evidence on the intrinsic excellency of the Scripture as the true ground on which its authority and claim to obedience rests; and they established a firm criterion of canonicity, namely, the purity and force of teaching Christ and his gospel of salvation. They did not reject the testimonies of the fathers, but they placed over them what Paul calls the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Cor. 2:4).

Luther was the bold pioneer of a higher criticism, which was indeed subjective and arbitrary, but, after all, a criticism of faith. He made his central doctrine of justification by faith the criterion of canonicity. He thus placed the material or subjective principle of Protestantism above the formal or objective principle, the truth above the witness of the truth, the doctrine of the gospel above the written Gospel, Christ above the Bible. But we must remember that Luther first learnt Christ from the Bible and especially from the Epistles of Paul, which furnished him the key for the understanding of the scheme of salvation.

He made a distinction, moreover, between the more important and the less important books of the New Testament, according to the extent of their evangelic purity and force, and put Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation at the end of the German Bible.

He states his reason in the Preface to the Hebrews as follows: "Hitherto we have had the right and genuine books of the New Testament. The four that follow have been differently esteemed in olden times." He therefore appeals to the ante-Nicene tradition, but his chief objection was to the contents.

He disliked, most of all, the Epistle of James because he could not harmonize it with Paul's teaching on justification by faith *without* works, and he called it an epistle of straw as compared with genuine apostolic writings. However, we must not overlook the fact that Luther makes this remark in connection with the epistle of James when comparing it with the epistles of the apostle Paul. The German Reformer was not blind to the merits of James as a fresh and vigorous teacher of practical Christianity, did not therefore condemn this epistle of James entirely. The Lord willing, we will conclude this quotation in our following article.

H.V.

Over all God reigns forever,
Through all ages He is King;
Unto Him, thy God, O Zion,
Joyful hallelujahs sing.

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

(3)

Continuing to mention various objections against the suggestion that early adolescents be encouraged to partake of the Lord's Supper before they make confession of faith, we may take note of the following:

3) This plan would be *contrary to the idea of the Lord's Supper, namely, that of active and discerning participation*. This consideration is closely connected with what we have mentioned already concerning the view of the Lord's Supper found in our confessions. And we will not enlarge on this at length here. Besides, we will have more to say on the readiness and degree of development of adolescents with a view to the Lord's Supper and confession of faith later. We may concede, of course, that an adolescent is not like an infant any more and totally without understanding of the sacrament and the truths signified thereby as the infant is without understanding of his baptism. In fact, the same may be said of a little child of five or six years old. He can very well understand something of the truths of his salvation and have a personal faith *in his childish way*. And the adolescent can also have an understanding of the realities for which the sacrament stands and have a personal faith *in his adolescent way*. But by the same token, it must be conceded that an adolescent, especially an early adolescent, is not yet an adult and is not yet mature and has not yet reached a mature understanding and a mature faith. He is still developing and still approaching that stage of discernment in which he is able to partake of the Lord's Supper. And personally, while we seem to live in an age when our adolescents are considered by themselves and by their parents to be very grown up and are even to a degree artificially forced to be grown up, I am inclined to the opinion that they are after all very immature — perhaps more so than formerly — and that too, especially when it comes to things spiritual. Moreover, I believe that if they have reached that degree of discernment when they are able to discern the Lord's body in such a way that they can partake of the supper in more than a formal and outward way, they have also reached the point where they can and should make confession of faith. If the latter is impossible, the former is also. And in view of the fact that according to our confessions we do actually make confession of faith at the Lord's table, it seems to me that we face the alternative of either maintaining the necessity of confession of faith as a requisite for admission to the Lord's Supper or of discarding the requirement of confession of faith altogether. If one remembers that at the table of the Lord we do make confession of our faith, and that too, publicly, our established custom of confession of faith would lose its meaning and necessity, become a misfit, under this new system. And the result will be that you lose every objective standard for ad-

mission to the Lord's table. For if a child of 12 or 13 may be admitted, why should not a child of 8 or 9; and if a child of 8 or 9, why not a child of 5 or 6?

4) This plan is *contrary to Christian discipline and its purpose of maintaining the purity of the sacraments*. It is the express purpose of Christian discipline to prevent the sacraments from being profaned by the unbelieving and ungodly. And while we baptize all infants of believers, this is possible only because "our young children do not understand these things." For that reason we may not exclude them from baptism. If this same reasoning could be applied to all early adolescents in regard to this sacrament, which involves active and discerning participation, then we could concede that they must be admitted to the Lord's table. But we know very well that among our early adolescents there are those who are unbelieving and ungodly. And now these unbelieving and ungodly, whom we know are found among our children, must be allowed and even encouraged to come to the Lord's table? This almost amounts to an application of the idea of "open communion" to the sphere of the covenant.

5) Nor is it true, as has been suggested, that discipline — and, in a sense, excommunication — of baptized members requires that they first be admitted to the Lord's Supper. I believe we may draw a parallel between the admission of baptized members to the Lord's table and the exclusion (and in that sense, the excommunication) of baptized members from the Lord's table. Just as you admit baptized members, or *potential* communicants, so you also discipline and excommunicate those who because of their baptism and status as baptized members are potential communicants. I see no difficulty here whatsoever. And it is rather significant to me that while in other Reformed churches there has been considerable study and also development of the discipline of baptized members, there has been no effort to introduce the plan we are now considering.

6) Finally, as a practical argument, I would object that *our churches would not be strong enough to exercise the stringent discipline required under this plan*. It must be conceded that it certainly would require a church strong in discipline and strict in the application of discipline to enforce this plan. On the whole, I believe our churches are slower to discipline adolescents and even adults who have failed to make confession of faith than they are in discipline matters generally. There is a good and bad side to this, I believe. But I also believe that it is almost in the nature of the case that fathers in the church are very loath to declare of an adolescent or a young adult that he is unbelieving and ungodly and is to be excluded from the table of the Lord. That is a very severe and serious judgment, but it is a judgment which consistories must sometimes make. Under this plan they would undoubtedly have to make this judgment earlier and more often than they do now. And I fear that they will continue to be loath to do so. If my fears are

correct, the result will be that you have an increasing number of non-confessing members who nevertheless have been and are admitted to the Lord's table and who ought not to be there at all.

For the above reasons — and I have only briefly sketched them — I feel very strongly that this first suggestion should never be introduced in our churches.

II. *Should covenant youth of 12 to 15 years of age be encouraged to partake of the Lord's Supper by making early confession of faith?*

By way of introduction, we may observe, in the first place, that this question is of a little different nature. It involves no violation of well-established Reformed principles and rules with respect to those who may participate of the Lord's Supper. And it involves no fundamental departure from the practice which we have always followed. This is rather a mere question of the *time factor* in confession of faith. And as such it is a rather practical and discretionary question. There may very well be an area of disagreement when it comes to answering this question. And the best we can do, in answering this question, is to try to reach a reasoned and well-founded conclusion as to what is the most prudent procedure for the church to follow.

In the second place, and in close connection with the above, we may note that the emphasis in this question falls on the *readiness* of early adolescents to make confession of faith. Can we, or can we not, agree that covenant youth of 12 to 15 years of age are as a general rule psychologically and spiritually ready to make confession of faith? If they are, then they ought to do so, and the church should expect them to do so and should, of course, then admit them to the Lord's table.

Some such plan as the following might be followed in this case: 1) Children of believers would make confession of faith sometime between the ages of 12 and 15, and would thereupon be admitted to communion. This would become the general practice in our churches. 2) This would be encouraged either by the adoption of some kind of general rule, or by the synodical adoption of a policy for our churches, and by way of instruction and urging from the pulpit, in the catechism class, and through personal labors of our pastors. There would, of course, be a certain period of transition; but eventually this would become the common practice in our churches. 3) Such covenant youth would be expected to continue their catechetical training for a time after their confession of faith, so that their doctrinal instruction might be completed. 4) If they made no confession by the age of 15 or 16, baptized members would begin to be the object of ecclesiastical discipline with a view to eventual "excommunication," if necessary, when they reach the age of adulthood.

In favor of this plan may be mentioned the following:

1) This plan would be in harmony with the historic Reformed practice. The history of the church teaches us that

both by Calvin and a Lasco and by the Reformed churches of the Netherlands in the early period the accepted age for confession of faith was about that of 14. And the churches were rather strict in this regard. According to Dr. H. Bouwman, admonition and discipline set in if by the age of 14 one was not sufficiently instructed to make confession of faith and to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. And indeed, there is a good side to this practice. It evinces a very earnest view of the necessity for early and thorough instruction of the covenant seed and also a very healthy view of the church as consisting of believers and their children.

2) The unhealthy practice of postponement of confession of faith in Reformed circles arose under the influence of pietism and false mysticism in the 18th and 19th centuries. Under these influences a false conception of church membership also arose. The idea of covenant children "joining the church" by confession of faith as also the distinction between confession of the truth and confession of faith, became prevalent under the pietistic and mystic reaction against the cold rationalism and dead orthodoxy that swept through the Reformed churches in the 18th century. We ought to forsake that mystical trend and return to the earlier practice of the Reformed churches. Covenant children do not join the church, but they are already baptized as members of Christ's church.

3) Early adolescents (of 12 to 15 years) are quite able to make confession of faith, consciously to assume their position in the church, to discern the Lord's body, and to partake of the Lord's Supper. Communicants do not have to be little theologians before they are admitted to the Lord's Supper, and we ought not to over-emphasize the intellectual and doctrinal aspect of confession of faith. Instead, we should lay more stress than we do on the spiritual and volitional aspect of confession of faith.

4) This practice would have the benefit that covenant youth would be tied in more closely with the church at a critical period of their life and that through the sacrament as a means of grace their faith would be strengthened and encouraged at a time when they need it most.

5) Under this plan our covenant youth would be made more conscious of their covenant obligations, and the idea would be avoided that the youth of the church are more or less free to live irresponsibly and to "sow their wild oats" until they grow up and settle down and become good and ready to make confession of faith.

To the above you could add some of the arguments advanced in favor of the first plan too. We will conclude our discussion of this subject next time, the Lord willing. Meanwhile, what do *you* think of Plan II?

H.C.H.

Thy burden now cast on the Lord,
And He shall thy weakness sustain;
The righteous who trust in His word
Unmoved shall forever remain.

DECENCY and ORDER

Literary Censorship

(Article 55, Concluded)

To ward off the publication of heresies by means of civil or ecclesiastical censorship has proven ineffective and unsuccessful. The Roman Catholic Church put forth a very vigorous effort to accomplish this especially at the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. They considered the writings of the Reformers to be heretical and, therefore, forbade their publication. They threatened the authors of these works with excommunication and martyred and persecuted those who in any way helped to publish or to distribute this forbidden literature. They ordered these books to be burned wherever they might be found. A very intensive campaign was conducted to squelch the voice of the Reformers. All this, however, did not dampen the spirit or hamper the spread of the Reformation.

It was not very long before the Reformed Churches were confronted with the same problem of curbing the spread of undesirable and heretical literature. Would the church allow complete freedom of press or would it be more desirable that the church exercise some control in this regard? The Reformed Churches took the latter position so that in the original fifty-fifth article of the Church Order provision was made that, "no one, being of the Reformed religion, should undertake to publish a book or a pamphlet dealing with a religious matter unless he had first received permission and approval of the Ministers of his Classes, or of the Ministers of his Particular Synod, or of the theological professors. These professors could not give approval without the foreknowledge of the Classis in which they resided." The Synod of 1571 even went further and ruled that "no one, regardless of the fact whether he belonged to one of the Reformed Churches or not, should be permitted to publish a book without proper authorization." Following synods confirmed this position in the obvious hope that the government in the Netherlands would become wholly Reformed and support this stand. This, however, did not materialize and so in 1586 the ruling was restricted to those who professed to be Reformed and over whom therefore the church had immediate supervision and control. It was at the great Synod of Dordt in 1618-19 that the article was written as we have indicated above.

For more than one reason this attempt to prevent the publication of heretical books was destined to fail. First of all, the desired cooperation by the government to enforce this ban was not forthcoming. In fact, late in 1618 the government in Holland made a law of its own which was much less drastic than that which the churches had desired. Then too, since the broader ecclesiastical bodies are not in session

continuously, it was impossible to pass on all the writings that were submitted. The only way that this could be done was through committees and this tended toward hierarchism, that much dreaded evil. Besides, often the wrong men were in charge of this supervision so that in effect the result was that the writings of Reformed men were banned and non-Reformed men could publish their works without restrictions. In 1703 F. Van Leenhof published his *Heaven on Earth* with proper approval, while in 1708 the churches had to depose him because of heresies advocated in this book. The rule was ineffective and often did more damage than good. Beside, as Dr. Bouwman says, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (Prov. 9:17). Official disapproval of books usually arouses curiosity and whets the appetite of the public so that refusal of approval often made good advertisement and promoted the reading of such publications if they were published in spite of the opinion of those who reviewed the book. In other words, tell the child that he may not have something and he will want it all the more. Inform the public that a certain movie that has failed to pass censorship will be shown in a certain theatre and the place will be filled to capacity. The public will clamor for a repeat performance. Forbid a book and it will receive more attention than one that is favorably recommended. Such is the perversity of human nature.

Does all of this mean then that there should be no censorship at all? We think not. We believe that censorship of literature (and other things as well, such as, radio, television, music, amusements, etc.) should begin in the home. As parents we must saturate our homes with the Word of God and that which is in harmony with the Word and forbid entrance to those things that defile the mind and soul. Further, we should positively cultivate and develop in ourselves as well as in our children a desire for and interest in that which is pure and wholesome. It is impossible to so control the press that the world is prevented from publishing the type of worthless literary rot that satisfies the carnal mind but it is an indication that something is radically wrong with our own training and censorship when young people of the church are seen indulging more, in the reading of cheap paper-back romance and mystery stories, picked up at the corner news-stand, than in the reading of *The Standard Bearer*. This is tragic and then they even have the audacity to express that for the reading of such things as *The Standard Bearer* and other good literature they have no time in their busy life. It is time that the home, in cooperation with the schools, puts forth a new emphasis upon literature-appreciation in the good sense of the word so that our children may learn to distinguish between the good and the bad, the edifying and the destructive in the field of reading. Though it is impossible to rid the world of its literary filth, it is possible, by the grace of God, to keep the stuff out of the lives of God's children. This calls for thorough instruction, firm discipline and diligent training. This sort of censorship we believe is conducive to good results. It means that we

will have to undo our materialistic emphasis and learn to reappraise true moral and spiritual values.

The school and the church, too, must exercise a censorship of books although not in the sense that they would presume to control the printing presses or publication business. In selecting textbooks to be used, in building both school and church libraries and in other projects where literary works are involved, great care and discretion must be exercised. It is no easy task for even when the scope of our problem is limited to those works that are today published under the name of "Christian fiction, non-fiction and religious periodicals," there is an overwhelming mass of material on the market that is saturated with subtle heresies designed to deceive the undiscerning reader. No matter how careful the censorship, some of it is bound to creep through. For this reason, too, the most potent and effective censorship is that which is effected through positive and sound instruction in the truth. The truth must be preached and taught and in the measure that it is applied by the Spirit of God unto the heart, the subject will not only develop a deep love for all that is good, pure and true but will repel every form of heresy he may encounter in his reading.

Our conclusion is that the solution to the problem of censorship of literature is not to be found in legislation, control or any other arbitrary, mechanical or man-made device but in grace alone. The problem is resolved for those who are consciously in Christ and who live out of His fulness. They love the truth and hate the lie. They will not support, nor promote the sale of, nor recommend to others heretical and deceiving publications. To be sure, this does not put these dangerous books out of circulation nor does it prohibit or make impossible their publication but it does relegate them to a sphere where they can do no real damage. Let them then not be found once among us, in our homes, our schools and our churches.

It may not be out of place to make a few remarks yet about this problem of "censorship" as it exists even in the world today. A real problem it is. Of this the world itself is deeply conscious. It boasts of a "free-press" and yet, realizes very well that this freedom of press cannot be unlimited. One may not be permitted to publish anything they desire but must remain within the limitations of worldly "decency." This restriction of the freedom of press the world tries to regulate by law. But this proves to be very difficult if not impossible because "decency" is a relative thing in the world that recognizes no objective standard such as the Word of God to determine what is good or bad. Each would decide this for himself and then what one regards as vile is to another an exhibition of real "culture." What one calls obscene is by another considered to be artistic. Laws are made but openly defied by those who publish and peddle morally corrupt literature because the laws fail to state clearly what constitutes a violation. The peddler of smut is certain that even if he is apprehended, a smart lawyer will circum-

vent the law so that he will escape any penalty for his maliciousness. Evidence of this is seen daily in a city like Chicago. One noted news columnist has exposed many times the fact that the law enforcing powers in the city are reluctant and in many cases even refuse to make arrests where arrests should be made because they know beforehand that the charges will not be upheld in the courts. The result is that the flow of obscene and pornographic literature increases. The market for it is no longer hidden. This lucrative business draws more and more into it. Already it has reached millions of dollars per annum and the end is not in sight. Evil abounds, waxing worse and worse until the measure of sin is full.

For it there is no solution to be found in the world. Man cannot curb his own passion for evil. Education, without the fear of God, only trends to produce a more subtle and bit more polished perpetrator of the same corruption. As long as there are corrupt people who demand corrupt literature, there will be producers and peddlers to supply this demand.

The answer is to be found in the Word of God. It is this: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Romans 1:32). And again, "Indignation and wrath, (from God) tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Rom. 2:8, 9).

See then that your garments are kept clean. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Have no fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness and give all diligence through sound instruction to ward off every form of the lie that can only lead to destruction. Be assured that "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life . . . but glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good" (Romans 2:7, 10).

G.V.d.B.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

(Continued from page 155)

be and is ever faithful to His promises, to the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to all of their spiritual seed. This absolute independent faithfulness of the covenant God would become perfectly evident through the work which Moses was being sent to perform. This name of God would be established as a memorial of faithfulness to his people forevermore. It would prove beyond doubt that God is the I AM THAT I AM.

B.W.

ALL AROUND US

RECENT MOVEMENTS TOWARDS ECUMENICISM

The unity of the church has always been a grave problem in the history of theology and of the church in the New Dispensation. In recent years this problem has come to the foreground of religious thought many times. The Roman Catholic Church, defining the unity of the church as a unity of external organization, has always claimed to have achieved the goal of "one holy catholic church." For this reason also, Rome has often sneered at Protestant Churches who, since the Reformation, have been splintered into an almost innumerable number of groups, sects, denominations and organizations. It seems as if Rome's criticism has had its effect, for more and more, Protestant churches also are striving for the unity of external organization. This has resulted in a number of mergers joining several denominations under one ecclesiastical roof, as well as several organizations more loosely bound, but uniting various denominations in councils, synods and associations. There are, for example, such organizations as the World Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Council of Churches, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod.

There have been some recent startling developments in this field of ecumenicism and church union. *Time* magazine recently reported on one of these. A certain Rev. Dr. Eugene Blake who is the executive head of the United Presbyterian Church preached a sermon in San Francisco's Episcopal Grace Cathedral, where Bishop James A. Pike is minister. He proposed in this sermon a union between four denominations in the country — the Methodists, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and the United Church of Christ. This would form one denomination numbering 17,800,00 people. The United Church of Christ was recently formed by a merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church with the Congregational Christian Churches. This latter merger is still the subject of dispute and court action, but will undoubtedly continue in the face of some scattered opposition. Dr. Blake also suggested some general basis on which these denominations could unite. He suggested a compromise between the Episcopalian emphasis on the apostolic succession of the bishops and the more Reformed and Presbyterian practice of voting in officebearers and calling ministers through a vote of the congregation. He spoke broadly of the doctrinal basis as necessarily including the doctrine of the trinity and the maintenance of two sacraments — baptism and the Lord's Supper. He mentioned some minor points of dispute as, for example, the type of clothes that the ministers and bishops would wear.

There was considerable support for his idea among the leaders of the denominations he included in his plan, although there was by no means unanimous agreement. He suggested that it would take a minimum of ten years to effect such a

merger, but evidently believes that the value of it would warrant the time and energy expended to make this super-denomination a reality.

Another development along these same lines was the recent meeting of the Archbishop of Canterbury with the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Although the discussion that was held between these two men and the conclusions, if any, which they reached were never published, everyone interested speculated that they talked of union between the Anglican Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Press made quite a point of it that at least in this case here was no room for compromise. While the Protestant could merge denominations by compromise, each participant sacrificing some of its principles, the Roman Catholic Church would never do this. If the Anglican Church of England wanted to join with the Roman Catholic Church, that could be considered; but only by means of the Anglicans becoming completely Roman Catholic. The Anglicans did not have to expect that the Roman Catholics would meet them half way.

This striving in the church world for external unity is of utmost importance. It is difficult to say whether there will be one massive church in which all so-called Christian Churches are united before the end comes. It is true, no doubt, that the false church will be the right arm of the Anti-christ. It is also true that the church world in the days of Anti-christ will be very sharply divided between the true church — the remnant according to the election of grace — and the false church which has apostatized. It is more than likely that the present trends towards merger will continue and in fact gain momentum as time goes on. And even if the church world — now I mean, as opposed to heathendom — never succeeds in forming one large denomination, nevertheless, as the churches drift deeper into apostasy they will certainly be one in organization, in purpose, in their efforts to support and promote the kingdom of the beast. It is for this reason that these movements warrant our close attention.

It is, as a matter of fact, the confession of believers that the unity of the church of Jesus Christ is not a unity of external organization, but a unity which is completely an object of faith. We *believe* "an holy catholic church," even though that unity does not come to complete outward expression in time. And for this reason also, it is well to remember that this unity is spiritual; it is a unity of the body of Christ accomplished by Christ's Spirit. It is a unity of faith, of hope, of doctrine, of calling. It is a unity that finds its deepest principle and ground in Christ Himself.

It is also for this reason that the true unity of the church can never be realized by the efforts of man; it is a work of God. Rev. H. Hoeksema writes in his dogmatics, "The church on earth is divided, not only because of the natural causes of separation, such as distance, language, differences in races and nationalities, but also in regard to doctrine, confession, form of worship and of church government. How must

this be remedied? What must be the attitude of the church and of the individual believer over against this failure of the church to realize her true unity and to manifest that there is one Lord, one spirit, one faith, and one calling?

"Many there are in our day who find the cause of all the dissension and division in the church in too much doctrine and in creeds that are too specific in their doctrinal declarations. Hence, they advocate that all these specific declarations of faith by which each church erects a wall of separation around itself be forgotten, erased, eliminated, that the confessions be broadened, generalized, and that on the basis of this broad declaration of general principles the various denominations merge, and thus realize the unity of the church. However, it should be evident that in this fashion an outward unity may indeed be effected, but only at the expense of the truth, at the cost of the church's faith, which is the same as saying that it is a unity without the Christ of the Scriptures. The church is not interested in an outward unity, that reveals itself in a mighty human institution, as, for instance, the present existing World Council of Churches. And the church on earth that understands the character of the true spiritual unity of the body of Christ and that realizes her calling with respect to the manifestation of this unity can never co-operate with such humanistic, faith-destroying, Christ-despising movements of amalgamation. The unity of the church is centered in Christ. If the church is to grow in this true unity, she must grow in Christ. She must not have less of Christ, but always more. And her Christ is in the Scriptures. Hence, she must appropriate the Christ of Holy Writ. And that means that she must instruct and be instructed in the truth. She must not seek union in the way of less, but rather in the way of more and richer doctrine. She must put aside all doctrines of men, to be sure; but she must ever grow in the doctrine of Christ. Let the true church be ever so small in the world, she dare not seek the realization of her unity in any other direction than that of growing in the knowledge of Christ her Head . . . Only they that strive to approach that stature (of the fulness of Christ) are really working for the manifestation of the unity of the church, and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one."

THE ADAM QUESTION

Some years ago I received some pamphlets from a Consistory of a Reformed Church in New Jersey which dealt with a problem of the real existence of Adam. As I recall these pamphlets now, a certain student was being examined by a Classis prior to being ordained to the office of the ministry of the Word. During the course of the examination, it became evident that the student did not believe that Adam was a real person, and in fact he rejected the idea of the first three chapters of Genesis as describing something which actually took place. He preferred to speak of these chapters as an allegorical explanation of something other than the literal interpretation of the text would allow. When it was pointed out to him that Paul referred to Adam as a real per-

son, he informed the Classis that he was of the opinion that Paul was mistaken. When quizzed further on the matter, he complained that he was not the one who should stand trial for these views but that the responsibility lay with the New Brunswick Seminary of the Reformed Churches by whose professors he had been taught these things. This became an issue of some importance in the Reformed Church, being referred first to the Particular Synod, and later to the General Synod. I have not heard for some time what happened consequent to these events. But recently an article appeared in *Christianity Today* which speaks of a report of a committee appointed by the General Synod to study this issue of the historical reality of Genesis 1-3. The report was made and adopted by the General Synod last summer. The report is only very briefly quoted and evidently maintains the historical character of Genesis, but adds that the church must allow a certain latitude in the understanding of details.

Several men of the Reformed Churches criticized the report severely. They condemned it as too vague to be of any use and as opening the doors to the destructive hammer blows of higher criticism. Dr. John H. Ludham and Mr. John Richard De Witt wrote a pamphlet in which they expressed their concern about the report. This pamphlet was printed by the Consistory of the Sixth Reformed Church of Paterson, New Jersey. That indeed the report of the committee was vague and general is evident from the fact that Mr. De Witt himself wrote to each of the members of the original committee that drew up the report asking for their interpretation. Their responses showed that even they did not agree on what the report meant. Some said that the report expressed a belief that Genesis 1-3 were indeed descriptions of actual history; others thought it did not, and were sad about it; still others said it did not, and rejoiced; one did not commit himself on the question.

One cannot escape the conclusion that this is the sad and disastrous result of tampering with the simple meaning of the profoundly beautiful description of creation as given in Genesis 1. Once an attempt is made, in the name of so-called honesty to scientific advancement, to twist the meaning of the Scriptural narrative of creation beyond its obvious meaning and intent, this can only be the result. To make of the six days of creation long periods of time is to change Genesis 1 almost beyond recognition. And then the real meaning of the whole account is called into question. The result is that the whole narrative must be rejected as altogether too fanciful for the scientifically enlightened mind. Paradise the first did not exist, Adam is a fanciful or allegorical figure, the worlds came into being by some evolutionary process, and the fall is a figment of man's imagination.

But even here the matter cannot rest. For if the fall is not real, certainly there is no longer any need for the cross or for Christ who died on it "on account of sin." If one part of Scripture is called into question, the whole of Scripture is open to debate. Paul's words cannot be trusted, nor the words

of Peter or John or even Christ. Scripture stands or falls as a whole. No, Scripture stands. And all the efforts of men to destroy it cannot take one part from it. And because Scripture stands the faith of the church stands — a faith also that understands that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made from things which do appear.

Certainly this history in the Reformed Churches ought to have a sobering effect upon those who are eager to promote their views of periods instead of days of twenty-four hours. It is our hope that there is enough strength left in the Reformed Churches to combat this deeply serious error and to purge itself of it.

H. Hanko

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

Dec. 20, 1960

Rev. A. Mulder, of Kalamazoo, declined the call extended him by our Creston congregation. — Randolp's new trio consists of the Revs. C. Hanko, R. C. Harbach and M. Schipper. — The congregations of Forbes and Isabel jointly extended a call to our Missionary, Rev. G. Lubbers. — Grand Haven's congregation called the Rev. G. Van Baren from the trio presented to them.

Doon — Rev. Van Baren very cleverly utilized the back page of his Dec. 4 bulletin to print order blanks for subscriptions to *The Standard Bearer* and to the *Beacon Lights*. Only the blanks for the name and address were left for the subscriber to fill in — the mail address of Mr. Jas. Dykstra of the Standard Bearer Board, and Miss Janet Kunz, of the Beacon Lights Staff being given also. Surely only the lack of eight dollars could be a valid excuse for not ordering our church papers.

First — The Ladies' Aid Society recently dispensed gifts totaling over \$750.00, giving varying amount to *The Standard Bearer*, *Beacon Lights*, Adams School, Chr. High School, our own High School Society, Children's Retreat, Pine Rest Hospital and the Recording Fund, besides laying away another addition to the Mission Fund they are building up.

Edgerton — The thank offering received in the Communion service held Dec. 11, was designated for the Pine Rest Hospital.

Grand Haven's bulletin rack also contains pamphlets furnished by First's Sunday School Pub. Society, and radio sermons which the people are advised to pass on to friends after having read them themselves.

Holland's pastor, Rev. G. Lanting was the speaker at Hope's P.T.A. meeting held December 9.

Hope's Mr. and Mrs. Soc'y has been added to the ever lengthening list of groups to enjoy a guided tour of Children's Retreat.

Hudsonville's Dec. 11 bulletin had a special cover depict-

ing the needs of the Christian Foundation for Handicapped Children, and contained a notice of a benefit coffee and luncheon to be held in their village for that worthwhile cause.

Kalamazoo's pastor, Rev. A. Mulder, used a bulletin notice to express his thanks for the volunteer work, provided by his parishoners, which made possible the completion of a garage on the parsonage property.

Lynden's Dec. 11 bulletin, on the day that Rev. Harbach preached on Lord's Day 22 — The Comfort of Bodily Resurrection — contained this quote: "In this we have comfort, that all believers will rise at the last day; of which Paul, reasoning saith, 'if the dead rise not, then is Christ not risen.' The manner of our resurrection we may read in Ezek. 37, how we shall rise with flesh and bones."

Oak Lawn's Men's Society met in South Holland with their society, Nov. 28. The Young People's Society was host to South Holland's young people on Dec. 11. The two congregations maintain a joint choral society. All this shows a healthy relationship between sister churches which is highly commendable.

South East's congregation has decided upon the purchase of a Gulbransen Organ for their new church auditorium. The beginning of the funds for this purchase was by Mr. and Mrs. Society sponsored banks, and will be completed by an addition of fifty cents to the weekly budget.

South Holland's pastor, Rev. J. A. Heys, inserted the following notice in his Nov. 27 bulletin: "Several members of our congregations in Isabel and Forbes have asked us to express a word of thanks for them to our congregation for the services our pastor was able to perform in their midst on his recent Classical appointment."

The Program Committee of the Reformed Witness Hour contributed the following: "During the five Sundays of January Rev. H. Hoeksema continues his series of radio sermons expounding the vision of the Apostle John as recorded in the Book of Revelation, chapters five and six. Thus far in this current series, the radio listeners have learned that the council of God shall surely stand unto the coming of the Kingdom of God and the realization of His eternal Covenant; also that God alone realizes His kingdom, and all attempts of man to establish a kingdom of peace are vain, and that Christ alone is worthy and powerful to bring the kingdom of Heaven. Sunday, Jan. 1, the speaker further explains the Revelation with a sermon entitled "The Lamb Receives The Book." The following three broadcasts are devoted to the "Four Horsemen," in which the colors of the horses and their Biblical meaning are discussed. This series of radio broadcasts should prove exceedingly comforting and edifying to all the listeners who look eagerly for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Written copies are available by request. The address — The Reformed Witness Hour, P.O. Box 8, Grand Rapids 1, Mich."

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.