

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

THE PROMISE DEFERRED

"And these all, having obtained a good report, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11:39, 40

This text is really the theme of the chapter, as well as of the whole epistle.

It hails the ascendancy and excellency of the New Testament over the Old.

In the Old Testament the saints were happy in their salvation and redemption, but they did not receive the promise, that is, Christ. And why not? Because it did not please the Lord to make the Old Testament Church perfect without us of the New.

There was a better Thing in store, namely, God manifest in the flesh!

These all! Who are they?

They are first of all the saints mentioned in chapter 11: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, God's Israel and Rahab. Later are mentioned yet: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha, David, Samuel and the prophets.

Yes, but even then you have not exhausted the "all these."

It also includes all those who are not named. They include the whole Church of God of the Old Dispensation who walked in their 4000 years of pilgrimage upon this sorry earth. They include all the saints of God from Adam to the last soul that entered in the heavenly rest before the breaking of the walls of partition when Jesus came and died, and rose again.

These all! They are all God's people from the pre-deluvian world and of the Jewish Commonwealth.

And what did they receive?

They obtained a "good report."

Who gave that report? The answer is God!

And that is immense, amazing.

The original word used here for "good report," or, rather, for "obtaining a good report," is a word which reserved itself a place in the modern languages of today, namely *martyr*. It is used here in the passive aorist form of the verb.

The word "martyr" now means to be a sufferer for a cause. But originally this word meant to be a "witness," and then a witness for God. But since witnessing for God meant that you would have to suffer for it, the meaning became more and more as we understand it today: you became a sufferer, you were hounded to death, you died on the stake, or on the gallows, or in the arena.

But here it means that God gave a good report of them.

Look at verse 2 of this chapter: "the elders obtained a good report"; or verse 4: God reported of Abel that he was righteous, "God testifying of his gifts" (and that was the gift of the little lamb, slain for Abel's sins). And remember that the word "testifying" above is the same as in our text for "good report." Look also at verse 5: Before Enoch's translation he had this testimony (again: the same word as in my text) that he pleased God.

And that's the way it is in all of the Old Testament Scriptures: God gives a good report of His people. He calls them righteous, children that will not lie, good, kind, saints, beloved of the Father, etc.

Think of the psalm where God says: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." These quotations can be multiplied over and over again.

Every student of the Bible knows that God gives a good report of His saints throughout the Bible.

How did they obtain this good report on the part of God?

The answer is: "through faith."

And our chapter will give us a definition of that faith:

"the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Well, it is rather plain that the things hoped for, the things not seen, are the same. They are the things of the new world for which we are waiting. And the "substance" and the "evidence" of these things is faith. And that stresses the wondrous truth that every Christian has that new world now already in possession, in his very heart and mind and soul. Our life is hid with Christ in God. You carry with you the quality, the savour of the new world that is to come in the day of Christ.

Faith is the power to see the Invisible God. It is the power to see the Kingdom of God. It is the living tie that unites you with Jesus, and through Him, with God.

And that same faith tells you throughout the Bible that God has a good opinion of you. It is faith which tells you every day you are the son or the daughter of God. It is faith that justifies you, and that means first of all that your sins are forgiven you.

And that faith cannot be obtained by yourself. It is the free gift of God. So there is no boasting by anyone.

That's what they received. But they did not obtain the promise.

That sounds strange to our ears, for we read a thousand times that the Old Testament saints *did* receive the promise and the promises. Look at verse 17 of this same chapter. There we read that Abraham "had received the promises."

However, the difficulty is not serious: you must make a distinction between the promise of God which came from Adam to the last saint in the Old Testament, and the *fulfilment* of these promises. For both the same word is used.

* * * *

Now let us look at exactly what the Old Testament saints received.

First of all, they received the word of promise. Allow me to point you to the Mother of them all, the epevangel given to Eve in Paradise right after they fell into sin. There God promised that He would raise up a Seed who would crush the head of the devil.

Later we hear of God's promise to Abraham, and there the form is somewhat different, but essentially it is the same promise: I will be your God and the God of your seed.

And so I could go on, and write about a thousand pages of manuscript telling you about the many and various promises which God gave to the Old Testament Church. He would send the Messiah, the Goel, the Redeemer, the Rock, the Tower, the Son of the Virgin, the great King, the Prophet like unto Moses, the Lamb, the Mighty God, etc., etc.

And because of this wondrous variety, sometimes you read of the "promises," in the plural.

But the Church of the O. T. did receive "the word of promise."

Secondly, they received the blood of the innocents. Right at the start the blood of the innocent did flow: God killed a sheep to clothe both Adam's and Eve's nakedness. They are the first type of the cloak of righteousness.

And the blood continued to flow. For four thousand years.

They were the gift of God to His church of the Old Dispensation.

And . . . this blood was connected, directly related to the word of promise.

But few saw the connection. Many of God's people went to heaven without ever having had a clear view of the connection between this blood of bullocks and the word of promise. I know of three men who saw it. First, Moses who came back from the Mount with a shiny countenance. The glory of the heavenly things was reflected on his face. I think he saw the Christ in His unspeakable humiliation, and the glorification of both the Christ and His Church. Second, Isaiah who saw the Cross of Jesus, came home, and weeping wrote his 53rd chapter: "we hid as it were our faces from Him." Third, Abraham, of whom Jesus said: "He saw my day and was glad."

But the great majority did not see this connection.

Thirdly, the Church of the O. T. received the faith of God. And that made all things well.

They received the Word of the Promise, the blood of the innocent victims, and the faith, and that was sufficient to make them happy, to save them, and to bring them safely in heaven.

But they did not receive the Promise in its fulfilment.

The Promise in its fulfilment is called in my text: "SOME BETTER THING."

And what is that?

This: The coming, the suffering, the dying, the resurrection, the ascension and the return of Jesus Christ in the Holy Ghost on Pentecost.

Here is the comparison: "These all," that is the Old Testament Church, with but crumbs, plus faith, received a good report from God, and they went singing to heaven.

But we! Oh, beloved, what did we receive? We received centrally the whole Kingdom of Heaven! That is, Jesus Christ the Lord! Hallelujah!

Now read Hebrews 10:28, 29: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was

sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

Read that . . . and tremble!

See that you neglect not so great salvation!

* * * *

Now then, what is the reason why God gave crumbs to our O. T. brethren and sisters, and to us so very, so very, very much?

Here is the answer: God would not make perfect the Old Testament Church without us!

The idea is that it did not please God to show His utmost beauty, attractiveness and sweetness to the Old Testament Church exclusively. He would not show that sweetness to the ante-deluvian world nor to the Jewish nation. He did not want to make perfect that church exclusively.

What does it mean "to be made perfect"?

That means to take part in the REGENERATION OF ALL THINGS!

And that will come in the day of Christ when He reappears on the clouds of the heavens.

That will come to pass when all things burn and burn and burn. And out of the burning will appear the perfect state.

This is God's reason for withholding perfection from the ante-deluvian world and the Jewish nation: He desired to save the whole world of His good-pleasure: Jew, Greek and Barbarian!

John the Divine saw a great multitude standing in heaven round about the great white throne of God, and they came from out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples and kindreds of the earth, and they sang a beautiful song to God.

One word of it is in the Hebrew tongue. Your little children sing it often. It is HALLELUJAH!

G.V.

Jehovah's praises sound abroad,
Rejoice before the living God;
Prepare the way that He may come
And make the desert places bloom.

A father of the fatherless,
A judge of widows in distress,
Is God, the God of boundless grace,
Who dwells within His holy place.

God frees the captive and He sends
The blessedness of home and friends,
And only those in darkness stay
Who will not trust Him and obey.

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EDITORIALS

Fast Disintegration

Last month a special meeting of the schismatic synod was called for the purpose of determining whether or not they, the schismatic churches, should return to the Christian Reformed Church. This, of course, was occasioned by the last letter they had received from the synod of that church in which the latter specified the conditions under which such a reunion could be accomplished.

We will not give a detailed report of all the actions of this special synod. But some items are of sufficient interest to our readers to report them in our *Standard Bearer*. On the whole, all the actions of this synod reveal that the schismatic churches are fast disintegrating. There are, evidently, groups that are ready to join the Christian Reformed Church whether or not the latter maintain the Three Points; others rather remain independent and stay by themselves; still others apparently would join the Christian Reformed Church on condition that the Three Points be no longer considered as having binding force; while, finally, there is also a group that now feel that they were deceived by their schismatic leaders and would like to return to the fold of the Protestant Reformed Churches, something, however, that can be done only in the way of confession of their sin of ever having departed from us and of having created a schism in our churches.

In a way, it is amazing that the disintegration of the schismatics comes as fast as it does: only about seven years after their separation from the Protestant Reformed Churches they already fall apart. But in another way, it is not surprising at all for, after all, the group that departed from us did not do so for the sake of principle but, especially as far as their leaders were concerned, from entirely different motives. It is by this time very evident that they never loved the Protestant Reformed truth. And no church can maintain and has the right to maintain a separate existence except on the basis of the truth and of definite and distinctive principles. This certainly was the case with the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924, but with those that left us this was not the case at all. Hence, their fast disintegration cannot surprise us.

As far as this special synod is concerned, the following items are of interest to us.

1. A motion was made to request the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church to reconsider the removal of the Three Points so that reunion can be effected only on the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity or the Reformed Confessions. According to our reporter three grounds were furnished for this motion, namely: a. The removal of the Three Points and their binding power would

serve the cause of ecumenicity. b. The various stipulations in the letter of the Christian Reformed Synod have different interpretations among us. c. Discussion should take longer. (I take this to mean that, after the reunion, there should be opportunity and time to discuss the Three Points.)

This motion was discussed and then tabled.

2. Then there was a motion to adopt the advice and decision of Classis East. This classis had decided immediately to join the Christian Reformed Church on the basis of the letter sent by the synod of that church to the schismatic synod. An amendment to this motion was made to insert the words "in substance" so that motion would read: we reply to the Christian Reformed Synod by adopting in substance the overture of Classis East. This amendment was adopted. But the amended motion failed by a vote of eight to eight.

3. The motion that had been tabled (see under 1) was now taken from the table and was adopted. The vote was nine to seven. It was decided to appoint a committee to draw up a letter to the Christian Reformed Synod to explain the motion that had just been adopted. We have a copy of this letter and we publish it here:

"To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

"Dear brethren:

"We herewith desire to continue our conversations with you regarding union of our two denominations. Please accept our sincere thanks for the prompt and kind letter embodying your answer to our communication of our Synod of June, 1960. We are happy for this evidence that you, with us, are seeking to fulfill the prayer of Christ, 'that they may be one.'

"In this letter to us you suggest that 'an outright and official setting aside of them (the three points) is unwarranted' in response to our request 'to consider the Three Points' of 'Common Grace' as 'without any further binding force.' You also suggest 'a more positive basis' as being: 'a. If you will agree that the Three Points are neither Arminian or Pelagian; that in the light of the official interpretation given by our Synod of 1959, the objection that the Three Points are in conflict with Scripture and the Forms of Unity is not valid; and that you will agree not to agitate against official interpretations. b. If we do not require submission in the sense of demanding total agreement with the Three Points; we recognize and bear with scruples which you may have, in the expectation that we together may come eventually to a better understanding of the truth; and not bar those who have certain misgivings or divergent interpretations as long as they refrain from propaganda for their interpretations.'

"We have given serious consideration to this suggested basis on which to unite and our Synod has not been able to concur in the judgment that this is the better way. Therefore we would approach you to ask that you consider again that our churches unite on the basis of Scripture and the

Three Forms of Unity. We ask this, not out of a stubborn insistence on our own position, but because the calling of the Lord toward unity is better served in this way. We would ask you to consider the following in addition to that which was advanced in our letter of last year.

"1. That while the matter of a basis for union is one that concerns your church and ours first of all, it nevertheless has its impact upon and will have influence upon the ecumenical striving as we reach out to other manifestations of the body of Christ. We believe that the results of our striving toward unity will make a wholesome contribution toward and give impetus to the true ecumenical desire which is to be found in many areas of the Reformed world. For the fostering of this ecumenical spirit, the broad and royal basis of the Scripture and the three historic creeds is sufficient.

"2. By this action you would serve us and enable us to practise this unity with far less danger of splintering in our churches. We reiterate our stand, expressed in our letter of 1960, that we no longer charge the Three Points with being Arminian and Pelagian, nor are we pleading for freedom to agitate and to cause turmoil and strife in the churches. We are opposed to agitation, propaganda or any unseemly or revolutionary action in the church. We are sorry for such actions of the past as we have pointed out in our letter of 1960. But we do plead for full prophetic liberty according to the Word of God, as bound by the confessions. We will not hide from you that some of us feel that this is not the case. In order that we may unite as a whole, rather than dividing our churches, we make this request again.

"3. May we also offer for your consideration the declaration, which, we believe, both your delegates and ours make at the opening of our Synodical sessions: . . . 'All the congregations of these churches believe all the books of the Old and of the New Testaments to be the Word of God and confess as the true confession of their faith the Thirty-seven Articles of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, formulated by the Synod of 1618-'19, together with the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of the Dordrecht Synod against the Remonstrants (Arminians).

"In conformity with the belief of all these congregations, we, as members of their Synod, declare that from the heart we feel and believe, that all the articles and expressions of doctrine, contained in the three above named confessions, jointly called the Three Forms of Unity, in all respects agree with the Word of God, whence we reject all doctrines repugnant thereto; that we desire to conform all our actions to them, agreeably to the accepted Church Order of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, and *desire to receive into our church communion everyone that agrees to our confession.*'

"We realize, brethren, the many and serious matters with which you will be busy and hope that you will not consider us presumptuous in addressing you once again. Believe of us that we feel strongly the injunction of the Lord to seek

the unity of the church and it is out of the conviction that you too seek it that we feel free to address you again.

"As far as the matter of procedure is concerned, if you can accede to our request, we will state that we prefer this as outlined in point 'a' under in your letter of 1960 and ask you hereby to appoint a committee to consummate such union.

"In any event, we may inform you that we have set the date of our Synod of 1961 so that it will meet after your sessions of June, 1961, so that we will be able to consider any communication you may address to us.

"Assuring you of our desire and pledge to serve the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the unity of the church, we submit this for your consideration and await your reply."

Thus far the letter.

We just wish to make a few comments.

1. First of all, the schismatic synod declared and now declares again that the Three Points are not Arminian or Pelagian. Do they not realize that this is a mere negative expression and that this is not sufficient? They confront the question: if they are not Arminian or Pelagian, what are they then? Let us not forget that the Three Points are dealing with one of the most fundamental principles and doctrine of our faith: the grace of God. This has been the main question of the Church in the world throughout the ages. It was the question of Augustine against Pelagius. It was the question that was before our fathers at the Synod of Dordrecht. It is the chief question of the church today. More specifically expressed, it is the question whether the grace of God is particular or general, whether God is gracious to the elect only or to all men. Now, the question which the schismatic synod must answer is, not only whether the Three Points are Arminian or Pelagian, but what, if they are not Pelagian or Arminian, are they then? Are they Reformed? Why, then, do they object to sign them, as did Van Weelden, De Boer, and Sebastian Cammenga before them?

I assure you that no Arminian will refuse to subscribe to the doctrine that God is gracious, in the preaching of the gospel to all that hear. And again, I am convinced that no Pelagian will have any objection to the doctrine that the natural man can do much good through the "common grace" of God.

But no truly Protestant Reformed man will subscribe to these false doctrines.

More about this next time, the Lord willing.

H.H.

With endless thanks, O Lord, to Thee,
Thy wondrous works will I proclaim,
And in the presence of Thy saints
Will ever hope in Thy good Name.

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART TWO

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Mystery of the Beast

Revelation 17:7-14

As woman, Babylon is symbol of the church, in the first place, as all Scripture plainly indicates. The church, the people of God, the covenant people, appear time and again in Holy Writ under the symbol of a married woman. In the Old Testament, Israel is the wife of Jehovah, pledged to Him in sacred bond of marriage in all faith and truth. And in the New Testament, the church is the bride of Christ. Especially in the book of Revelation, so we found, she appears time and again as the bride of Christ, appears again and again as a woman and mother both. In the twelfth chapter of this book we meet with a rather elaborate description of the church symbolized as a woman. And as the church she appears as the perfected bride of the Lamb, without spot or wrinkle. And therefore, the symbol of the woman as such is, on the basis of Scripture, nothing else than the people of God, the church of Christ, pledged to Him in faith and truth in all things.

But we found, in the second place, that this woman is a harlot, and as such representative not of the true, but of the apostate church. A harlot in Scripture is a married woman that has forsaken her rightful husband, has become unfaithful, and whores after other men, that are strangers. And so is the false, or the apostate church. Committing spiritual fornication, she bears the name of church. She stands outwardly in covenant relation to the God of salvation. She enjoys all the spiritual blessings of that relation to God. But essentially she has broken the pledge of faith and truth and separated herself from the covenant God, in order to ally herself with the powers of the world and the kingdom of Antichrist. She has all the outward appearance of the church, with ministry and officebearers, with the outward signs of the Word and the sacraments. She is busy in all kinds of nominally Christian work, and has perhaps more organizations than any other local church on earth. But she denies the truth, forsakes her God and Savior, tramples under foot the blood of the new covenant. In a word, Babylon, as the harlot woman, is the apostate church in this dispensation.

And finally, we found that at first consideration it may seem strange that this woman also appears as a city. But at second thought we found that after all this is not strange whatever, if only the analogy of the true church is kept in view. Also the true church is finally pictured to us as a city, as the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, destined to rule centrally over all the works of God in the new creation. And the same is true of the false church. In

every sense of the word the work of Satan is the parallel with the works of God. Even as the ultimate purpose of God is to establish His own kingdom in glory, so the purpose of the devil is to establish his own kingdom through the power of Antichrist. And even as in God's plan the church is, as it were, the army of the kingdom on earth, but is destined to rule over the works of God in the new kingdom that is to come, so also Satan established his own counterfeit church, in order that also she may develop into a city and ultimately have control over all things in the antichristian kingdom. That city, that center of the antichristian kingdom, that shall cap the climax of apostate Christianity, shall be Babylon in character although she shall continue to claim to be the true Jerusalem. And therefore the warning voice came to us from above: "Go ye out of her, my people, that ye may have no fellowship with her sins."

And now we must make a little study of the beast that carries the woman and with which she is evidently closely allied.

As to the character and identity of this beast, we need not be in doubt very long. In fact, in the light of what we have discussed in the past, we have already recognized this beast as the same as the one that was pictured to us in chapters 11 and 13. It is the antichristian world-power especially from its political point of view. It is the attempt of the devil to establish his own kingdom through the agencies of the powers that have been instituted for this present sinful world and dispensation. That this is true is clear, in the first place, from the fact that the general description here and in chapter 13 is the same. You will remember that in that chapter we were told of the beast that rose up out of the sea and that manifested itself as having seven heads and ten horns. So also this beast that is described in our present passage and that is carrying the woman is possessed of seven heads and ten horns. In the second place, it may be noticed that this beast has the same origin as the one pictured in chapter 11. True, in chapter 13 he is pictured as coming out of the sea, which symbolized the tempestuous ocean of the nations and tribes and tongues of the earth, swept on by war and revolution, while here he is pictured as coming up out of the abyss. But this is not necessarily conflicting. We must remember, in the first place, that in chapter 11 this same beast, that is there pictured in his antagonism and hatred against the two witnesses of Jesus Christ and in his war against them, is pictured as coming up out of the abyss, just as in the passage before us. There can be no doubt about the identity of the two. The same beast is pictured all the while, in chapters 11 and 17 as coming up out of the abyss, and in chapter 13 as rising out of the sea of war- and revolution-swept nations. And the difference is simply this, that in the one case he is pictured as to the idea and spiritual character. Spiritually this beast finds his origin in the abyss, in the kingdom of darkness, in the mind of the devil; and therefore he is pictured as rising up out of the abyss. But the devil realizes his kingdom, this antichristian beast, through the agency of

men and in the course of history; and for that reason he is also pictured as coming up out of the sea. In both, therefore, it is the same beast. But in the one case he is pictured as being the ultimate historic result of all the uprisings and developments of the kingdoms and nations of the world, while in the other he is pictured to us in his essential and spiritual origin, namely, in the wicked mind of Satan himself. In the third place, we immediately recognize this beast as identical with the one we have studied before because evidently his relation to the inhabitants of the earth is the same, both in regard to the saints and to the followers of Antichrist. In chapter 13 we read that all the dwellers of the earth wondered after the beast, were surprised at his wonderful appearance, admired and worshipped him. So in our text we read that the inhabitants of the earth wondered at the appearance of this beast, especially in view of the fact that he was, and is not, and yet is. In chapter 13 we read, however, that those whose names were written in the book of life of the Lamb were an exception to this rule, since they did not worship the beast, neither his image. And so do we read in our chapter that those that worship the beast are limited as to their number to the ones whose names are not written in the book of life from before the foundation of the world. And finally, in chapter 13 we read that the saints who refused to worship the beast and his image and to receive the sign of the beast on their forehead or hand were bitterly hated and maliciously persecuted, so that they could neither buy nor sell. Here we read that those that give their power to the beast are all of one mind, also in their war against the Lamb and against the called and chosen and faithful of Jesus Christ. And therefore, in general there can be no question about the fact that here we have again a picture of the final manifestation of Antichrist, the highest development of all the power of the world, the greatest feat of the devil, the terrible and glorious kingdom that shall come in the future to make war with the Lamb and His people. It is the picture of that great, universal kingdom that shall have sway over all the nations of the world for a time and have control over all things, but that shall be the opposition kingdom against the kingdom of Jesus Christ and shall make life unbearable for the saints of Jesus. But although the identity of this beast with the one that is mentioned in chapter 13 is established beyond any possible doubt, yet it must not be overlooked that in our chapter he is described from a different point of view and with a different purpose. That may be regarded as plain from the simple fact that we have here once more a description of the same beast, and that rather elaborately. If the vision in this chapter were not for a different purpose and in order to show the beast from a different point of view, it would have been sufficient for the angel to explain to John that this was the same beast as the one he saw before rising up out of the sea. This, however, he does not do; but, on the contrary, he adds various details in the interpretation which have not been mentioned before. In the second place, this is plain from these details themselves. We read of this beast that "he was,

and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss," and that "he was, and is not, and shall be," and the equally mysterious words, "The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven." So we read in this text a detailed explanation of the historic significance of the seven heads and the ten horns. Of the seven heads we read that they are seven mountains and seven kings, of which five are fallen, one still is, and the seventh is still to come in the future, while the beast as a whole is himself an eighth kingdom, or king, and is of the seven. And of the ten horns we also read that they are ten kings that have not yet received their power, but that shall receive authority in the future and shall give their power to the beast, all being of one mind with the beast. All these apparently mysterious details are added to the information we receive in chapter 13. And hence, it is plain that the purpose of this description is different from that in the former chapter. And that difference, it seems to me, consists in this, that in chapter 13 the purpose was simply to picture the terrible opposition of the beast against the kingdom of the Anointed of God, while in our chapter this opposition recedes into the background. The purpose of our chapter is in connection with chapters 18 and 19 to reveal the historical development of the antichristian power, as well as its final defeat and descent into destruction, as are mentioned three times in the words of our present passage. And then it is our conviction that in the heads we receive a picture of the various individual manifestations of the antichristian world-power in the history of the world, while in the ten horns we have a picture of the final formation of this power, when all the kings of the earth shall unite, being of one mind, to give their power to the beast. We must remember that in principle the beast, representing the antichristian power of the world, exists throughout the history of the world, particularly in the new dispensation. It existed in Daniel's time in the form of the Babylonian Empire; and Daniel prophesies of different forms of that same world-power that are to manifest themselves as principally opposed to the people of God. He speaks of the Persian, of the Grecian, of the Syrian and Roman power that is still to come in the future, each of which are temporary manifestations of the world-power in history, so clearly even that in Antiochus Epiphanes we may find a clear type of Antichrist in person. At any rate, the world-power as such always exists, and characteristically, is always opposed to the people of God. Instead of being satisfied to occupy their God-ordained position in the world, they aim at absolute control and at the establishment of one grand kingdom, in which man shall be his own god. The result is that there are various successive manifestations of the world-power, and that the latter passes through different stages of development. At the same time, we must remember that none of these realize the entire beast. None of them succeeds to establish the universal kingdom for which they strive. On the contrary, they all fail; and in so far they do not fulfill the symbol of the beast in its entirety.

H.H.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Moses' Rejection of Egypt

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. — Hebrews 11:24-26

And Moses was learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

— Acts 7:22, 23

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens. — Exodus 2:11

It was an anxious, wondering, fearful Jochebed who hurriedly followed her daughter Miriam toward the group of Egyptian women standing by the bank of the Nile. In the middle of the group was Pharaoh's daughter and at her feet was the ark of bulrushes which Jochebed knew so well. Even as Miriam had excitedly related, these women had discovered her son. But once she had approached the women, Jochebed's face lost its look of fear, her eyes began to sparkle with joy, her heart breathed a prayer of thanksgiving, for Pharaoh's daughter spoke, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Her son was not going to die; in fact, he was to be returned to her own home. The providence of God had provided for it, and the authority of Pharaoh's throne had commanded it.

Once again peace returned to the humble home of Amram and Jochebed. No longer did they need to fear the footsteps that passed by their doorway. The child had been given an Egyptian name, Moses, and was known as a son of Pharaoh's daughter. An edict of the throne protected him. Even the threat of poverty and hunger had disappeared. At regular intervals funds were received from the palace sufficient for all of the child's needs and enough for the family besides. Only one cause for concern remained. Moses could not remain always with his parents. Pharaoh's daughter wanted him for her own. She would allow Moses to remain with his parents only through the tender years of early childhood when he needed special care. After that he would be taken away to be placed in the courts of Pharaoh's heathen palace. There he would be in the midst of the world, far removed from all of the children of God. Very early Amram and Jochebed began to prepare the child for that day. There was no time to spare. From the moment the child Moses began to show signs of comprehension, they taught him the truth of the covenant and began to warn him concerning the dangers which he in a peculiar way would have to withstand. Never was Moses allowed to think that his life would

be easy or that his instruction in the truth could be allowed to wait.

How frequently during these early years Jochebed was required to bring the child to the palace so that Pharaoh's daughter could cuddle him and play with him like a toy, we do not know. Neither do we know how often a royal embassy approached their humble home to see if the child was being properly kept. Those were times of fear, for it was never known whether or not the time had come when Moses was to be taken away. At such times, while the parents stood quietly by in the silence of fear, they realized how powerless they were. The life of their child was in the hand of the Lord. For them there was only one comfort. From his earliest years Moses had shown an unusual interest in all that his parents sought to teach him. Eagerly he listened as they told him over and over again of all that had been passed on from the fathers before them. He memorized and retained all that was known about their God and His gracious covenant promises. He never neglected the opportunity to learn, seeming to feel that for him it was of special importance. It was evident to the parents that the spirit of the Lord was upon him. In this they found comfort and gave God thanks. Their prayers never ceased to ascend unto heaven in Moses' behalf.

Finally the much-feared time came. Pharaoh's daughter decided that Moses should be taken to make his home in the palace. With heavy hearts the family made the last preparations for his departure. There were the last words of instruction and warning; there was the last kneeling together in prayer; and then there were the last farewells. Through tear-blurred eyes the parents watched their child being led away. He looked so small, so much in need of his parents' care, so incapable of standing in the midst of an evil world. As the small figure faded into the distance they knew that his heart yearned for them even as theirs did for him; but henceforth all they would be able to do for him would be to pray. Only the grace of God could enable him to endure.

It was a strangely different world in which the child Moses found himself making his home. In place of the unadorned Hebrew hut, there was the regal splendor of the palace. In the place of the simple religious instruction of his parents, there were elaborate discourses by the most learned men of the ancient world. In place of the intimate family circle, there was the great household of Pharaoh with countless servants ready at any time to do his every bidding. Gone were the watchful eyes of his parents, ready to reprimand him for what which was wrong as well as to encourage him in the right. Gone was the intimacy of a home united in love and spiritual devotion. Gone was mutual awareness of a God who has made the world and to whom all of the allegiances of life belong. The new surroundings were entirely different. There were governors and tutors who, even though he was young, were concerned with nothing more than winning his favor. There were spectacular rituals and ceremonies which, although engaged in with

much pretentiousness, were in reality mostly sham. Amid all of the pomp and splendor of the court, there was a basic shallowness of life in which everyone lived for himself.

Of greatest importance for Moses in his young life was the opportunity which came to him for learning. As a member of the royal family, it was expected that he would eventually become a leader and a judge among the people. In preparation for this the whole of his life was centered. For such preparation there was no better place than ancient Egypt. It was by far the most advanced of all of the ancient kingdoms. It abounded in the knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, and chemistry. Many of the things known by them we in our day might consider but recent discoveries. They were learned in music and poetry, having libraries with thousands of volumes. The best of the instruction that this country could afford was given to Moses. Blessed with extraordinary ability by God, he advanced very rapidly in his learning. Stephen many years later expressed it, "And Moses was learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."

The struggles that went on in the heart of Moses all during these years we can only imagine. Were there not days and weeks on end when he was torn between the immense learning of his teachers and the simple faith he had learned from his parents? Were there not times when he was sorely tempted to throw himself into all of the sensual pleasures that were waiting for him in that heathen court? Were there not moments when his pride whelmed up within him urging him to grasp the opportunities afforded, to make for himself a name in the midst of the world? Were there not nights when he tossed upon his bed with heavy heart because he had allowed himself to follow much farther in the ways of the world than in his heart he knew was right? Yet through it all Moses' faith prevailed; it had to, for he was a child of God. As he grew in years he began to realize more and more that all of the learning of the Egyptians did not have the fundamental depth and soundness of the simple faith which he had learned from the lips of his parents. The Egyptians had much knowledge and many pleasures, but in their hearts they had no peace. Living in the midst of the world, Moses was not of the world. He could not think of himself as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. All of the treasures of Egypt held no real attachment for him; its pleasures he could not enjoy. Within his own heart he always remained the son of simple Amram and Jochebed, a Hebrew and a child of God.

Slowly the years went by and Moses came to maturity. Still Moses took no permanent position in the government, nor did he engage himself in a marriage. Was this not contrary to the efforts and urgings of his foster-mother and many others of the royal court? Surely for a man of Moses' ability the opportunities were many. As he grew Moses withdrew the more from public life. His heart was with the Hebrews laboring in the field. These were his people and he could not forget them. His prayer and longing was

for their deliverance. Already to Abraham it had been told that after four hundred years deliverance would come. Moses could not bind himself to the Egyptians; he had to make plans so that he could go with his people.

Gradually Moses took to walking out in the fields, and especially to those places where the Hebrews were working. His sympathies were there, and he could not keep himself away. There he saw it in all of its gruesome detail—the labor and toil, the sweat and the blood, the bodies weary and fainting, red with the stripes of whips. Time and again he flinched as he gazed on the blows of the taskmasters; he groaned within himself along with the cries of the workers; he fled with unbelievable anguish to the peace and quiet of the palace. Still he went again and again to stare with glassy eyes. With a pained and weary heart he watched; and what made it so hard — these were his brethren, the children of his God.

Slowly the mind of Moses began to evaluate the facts. God had foretold this all, and the time for deliverance was approaching. The nation of Israel was great and mighty in spite of their cruel oppression. All they needed was a leader, and who could prevent them from returning to Canaan? With the blessing of Almighty God upon them, no one could keep them from going.

Again Moses' mind turned to consider his own life. There was first his miraculous preservation from death but a few months after he was born, which spoke so evidently of the gracious providence of God. Then there were the early years of concentrated instruction by his parents in all of the truth of God's covenant. Finally there were the years of specialized preparation in the palace to qualify him as a leader of people and a judge among men. What did it all mean? Could anything be more evident than that God was preparing him to deliver His people from bondage? The very thought excited the ambition of Moses as nothing before had ever done.

Still there were two things that marred Moses' plans for the future. The first was for him the most painful. The children of Israel refused to recognize him as their brother. Perhaps they knew that he was a son of Amram and Jochebed; but that no longer made any difference. When he came into the fields with his royal, Egyptian dress, they eyed him with suspicion. While they labored in bondage, he was refined in labor and dress. While the taskmasters beat them into submission, Moses they treated with utmost respect. All of Moses' sympathetic looks and words would not relieve their suspicions. As long as this was true, they would never receive him as their leader.

And then there was the one other difficulty that remained: God had not called him to be Israel's leader. All of his plans were built upon his own suppositions. Until the Lord spoke, he could only wait.

So the years passed by as Moses planned and waited — waited for a calling from God.

B.W.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I John 2:18-21

b.

Let us now call attention to two passages from the New Testament Scriptures which clearly indicate that the "last times" refer to the New Dispensation from the vantage-point of the Old Dispensation. To come to this conclusion we discussed, in our former article, four passages from the Old Testament. Thus we saw the meaning of the "last times" in the prophetic utterances of a dying Jacob to his sons, the visions of a stubborn Balaam in the plains of Moab, the great and comforting words of Moses, the law-giver, ere he dies, and of the Messianic prophecies of the great prophet Isaiah. Cf. Gen. 49:1; Num. 24:14; Deut. 4:30 and Is. 2:2. However, let us now also call attention to the language and thought-pattern of the apostles Peter and Paul on this score.

In I Peter 1:20 we read the significant and instructive text which is as follows: "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." Now this is a very instructive passage in connection with the idea of the "last times" in Scripture. From this passage we learn the following: (1) That the believers are to walk in sanctification as those who have been redeemed with the greatest price. They are not bought with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood, as of a Lamb without spot or blemish. (2) That this was as foreordained before the foundation of the world. At that time it was not yet manifest. Fact is, that what was foreordained before the foundation of the world was not manifested till the time of Christ's suffering and death. The prophets in the Old Testament knew that they were not speaking of the things which they themselves should see and enjoy. Thus we read in I Peter 1:11, 12, "Searching out what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow. Unto whom it was revealed, *that not unto themselves*, but unto us they did minister the things, which are *now reported unto you* by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." It was then clearly evident to the prophets that they were speaking of the things which should be revealed in the "last times." Thus, as we have seen, Jacob, Balaam, Moses and Isaiah spoke. And thus it was with all of them. Abraham sees Christ's day "from afar" and he rejoices. (3) Hence, in the *last times*, according to Peter, it is made manifest what this riches of Christ is, and the fountain in Jacob is opened. And now there must be a walking in "fear and trembling" during the time of our

earthly sojourn more than ever. We must perfectly hope for the revelation of Jesus Christ in that day.

Also the apostle Paul ends his great book to the Romans, that masterful treatise on the Gospel as a power of God unto salvation, with the very significant words indicating the nature of the "last times" from the Old Testament usage of the term. Writes he in Romans 16:25, 26 as follows, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept in secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. To the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." It hardly needs any further elucidation to show what this passage teaches us concerning the contrast between the Old and New Dispensations of the grace of God. The contrast is between what "was kept secret since the world began" and "what is now made manifest" in these last times.

What we have thus far learned from this survey we may, for clarity's sake, state in the following:

1. That the "last times" are throughout viewed in Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, from the viewpoint of the Old Testament Seers, Jacob, Moses, Balaam, Isaiah and many others.
2. That the "last times" refers to the entire New Testament Dispensation, the fulness of times, when all time is made full, and wherein Christ is exalted on high Lord over all.
3. That in principle all things are now already made new, heavenly, and, therefore, this last time must be extended into the very appearance of Christ, his *Parousia*.
4. That all this must be remembered for a correct understanding of the "last hour" as here employed by the apostle John in his epistle.

Thus we are in a position to proceed to also try to see the meaning, in Scripture, of the "last hour."

We are quite aware that the King James Version translates I John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last *time*." However, the Greek text does not have the term "chronos" or even "kairos" ("time" and "occasion") but it reads "Hora," *hour*. We believe that we do well that with the Holland translation we retain the idea of hour (ure).

In our determining of the meaning of the term "hour" we must follow the approved method of interpreting Scripture in the light of Scripture. We may not simply think of "hour" in the sense of our sixty minutes on our time-piece of measuring time. That would lead us in the wrong direction. So easily then we would reason that the last "hour" is the last period just before Christ returns from our standpoint in history, anno 1960, and not from

that of the viewpoint of the O. T. prophets, whose language John employs. Hence, we will try to show the usage of the term "hour" in both the Gospel of John and his Epistle.

Turning to the Gospel of John we see that the apostle relates that Jesus spoke of both the "hour" and the "last day." Now it is very clear that the *last day* refers, in certain passages, to the "day," that is, the very last point in history, where it terminates, where the dead shall be raised, and the world shall be judged, and all things made manifestly new, a new heaven and new earth where righteousness shall dwell. Thus we read in John 6:40, "And this is the will of my Father, that everyone seeing the Son, and believing on him, should have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last *day*." And, again, in verse 39 (*idem*). "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last *day*." From this it appears that "day" is not the same as "hour." One could not very well say, "they could not take him for his *day* had not yet come."

From this it seems to me there must be some peculiar significance to the term "hour" in the mouth of Jesus, and consequently also here, when John speaks of the last "hour." It is our understanding that the term "hour" in the aforementioned Gospel of John refers to the particular, God-appointed and appropriate time in which the glory of Christ shall be revealed through death and through the resurrection and ascension. In this "hour" something will take place, God will come to be revealed in "grace and glory," the glory of the only-begotten Son. Here the Mystery hid from the ages will be revealed, uncovered. Great is the mystery of godliness. God is revealed in the flesh, seen of angels, preached in the world, believed by men, and taken up into glory!

Such is the *hour*!

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, who had kept so many things in her heart, could not restrain herself any longer, at the wedding-feast of Cana of Galilee, and would have Jesus publicly demonstrate himself, he rebukes her with the words, "Woman, what is there between me and thee; mine 'hour' is not yet come." John 2:4. And, speaking with the woman, the Samaritan, at the well of Jacob Jesus speaks to her of a time, that shall come and now is, which he calls the "hour." In this time men will not worship either in the hill of Samaria, in the Samaritan temple, nor in the earthly Jerusalem, the Jewish temple, but the true worshippers shall serve the Lord in Spirit and in truth. And again in John 6:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the 'hour' is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." And does Jesus not pray the great high-priestly prayer in John 17:1, where we read, "These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the 'hour' is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee"? It is the hour of the power of the Son of God, through death, resurrection and ascension. And this hour is the "hour" of the glorification of the Son in keeping the disciples

(the son of perdition excepted) and all who will believe through their preaching and finally the entering into the glory which Christ had with the Father ere the world was.

It is the "hour" of the glorification of the Son and of the Father, the triune God, God-with-us, Immanuel.

Since this leads to the final manifestation of the "glory" of Christ in his Parousia, this is the "last." And thus the entire New Testament Dispensation is the last "hour" from the viewpoint that here the Son of God Himself is revealed in glory. Listen to the key-note of the entire epistle of Hebrews where this is so wonderfully stated: "God, who in sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these *last days* spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high," Heb. 1:1-2.

Such is the specific *content* of the "hour."

Here every thing is fulfilment, it is better: a better priest, a better covenant, a better promise, a better temple and better sacrifices.

This should all be kept in mind when John speaks here of the last hour. Thus is the very prologue to this epistle itself. We read in I John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the *Word of life* . . ."

Yes, the "little children" know this one who is from the beginning. They know the love of the Father in him, and have in him the forgiveness of their sins, and with this word of life in them they are strong and overcome the Evil One.

But they must, and that emphatically so, keep in mind the nature of this last hour. This is also the time when *Antichrist* shall come. They must truly know their time and conduct themselves accordingly.

When they see men and women leaving the fellowship of the sons of God in this world they must not stand appalled; they must not stand with hearts filled with dismay. This too must come. It must come exactly in this "last hour." It could not come in any other. For only, when and if, the Son of God is come into the world can the Antichrist come. And this too is the time of many antichrists rising up in the midst of the church, and going forth from her because they must become manifest as not being of the church.

Little children, it is the last "hour."

Know your times and be not dismayed, but stand in the hour of the appearance of Christ without being ashamed nor being filled with dread and consternation.

G.L.

IN HIS FEAR

Children of Our Age

We are.

We are children of the age in which we live.

And then we do not simply mean that we are children who live in this particular age. That is such an obvious fact that there is no need to write about it. Nor can we do anything about that. In His fear we simply stay in that age. The only way to get out would be suicide, and that is not in His fear. No, we are here to stay in this age or era as long as it pleases God to keep us here. Whether the times are evil or good; whether there is war or peace; whether we lie on a bed of anguish and pain or are in full strength of life and living is sweet; whether we have little or whether we have much; here we are living in the twentieth century, in these significant sixties. The world makes much of it that we live in a critical time. It is called the space age, the atomic age, and who knows what the next phrase will be that is applied to the days in which we live? But live in this age, we surely do.

To be called children in this age is even to be questioned.

Children are quite liable to pass these lines up and not to read them. It is those who have left their childhood behind who will read these lines. And today there is more than one generation living in this age. There are the children, the minors who have not come to years of discretion. There are the parents who, instead of being classed as children, now have children of their own. And there are the grandparents and even here and there great-grandparents. Even then we insist that all these from the gray-haired great-grandparent down to the babe that has taken its first breath of life are children of our age.

And we mean that all these are children who have been produced by the age in which we live. The extremities of this human race as it is now found on this earth are children of this age to a lesser degree than those in the role of parent and of youngmanhood and youngwomanhood. Yet all from great-grandparent down to the wee infant have been produced by this age.

The aged among us are greatly children of the age in which they spent their lives from childhood through the prime of their lives. Yet even while they are amongst us today, they come under the influence of this particular age and are different because of it, be it reluctantly and to a lesser degree. And the infant in arms today will be more the product of the years to come than these present days. But he too is for the time being a child of our age.

And that means that we commit the sins of our age.

We follow the customs and habits of our age. We live in the type of homes built in our age with the labor-saving (?) devices of our age. We ride in or drive the modern automobile with its automatic transmission, its tremendous horsepower engines. We communicate with one another with amazing instruments invented by brilliant minds and put together by clever and nimble fingers. We sing the songs composed in our day. We eat the foods prepared in our day with an abundance of ingredients, preserved out of season by deep-freeze methods that leave so much of the fresh taste in them. We speed from corner of globe to corner of globe at breath-taking speeds. We have done away, to a great extent, the chore of chopping wood, of carrying out the ashes, of getting up in a cold house and struggling with a reluctant furnace. With a flip of the wrist we flood a room with light and plunge it back again into darkness. And so we could continue. We do live differently than any age before us; and even the most aged amongst us enter with us into these experiences. Who could deny it?

But that is not the point we wish to make. As we began to say, We commit the sins of our age. We are swept along on a tide of wickedness and rebellion against God. Our flesh commits the same sins that the world commits all around us. We are in that respect also children of our age. Ours is not the day of literal and open idolatry such as Israel practiced it even in the promised land. But our life is indeed a life of wickedness before God. And we all are not only in that world. We live the life of sin of that world according to our old man of sin, who is with us till the day of our death. Make no mistake about that. He who is wise will not deny this but take heed and give it some very serious thought. He who would walk in His fear will seek God's Word as a lamp for his feet and a light upon his path in the consciousness that he does walk through such a dreadfully wicked world and according to his flesh *is part of it*.

We are willing to concede quite readily that our flesh is even as the flesh of this world. With David we testify that we are also conceived and born in sin, and we make no boast about it that in this respect we are better than the world. But we ought to go one step further, if we are to speak the truth and present the picture correctly. Our flesh is not simply like the flesh of the world, our flesh is part of that world. The flesh of the Philippian jailor was flesh of the world and not simply like that of the world. The flesh of Ruth the Moabitess was not simply like the flesh of the world, it was flesh of the world. But the flesh of those who are born in the covenant sphere is just as much flesh of the world as those who are born outside that covenant sphere. He is not a Jew that is one outwardly, Paul says, but he that is one inwardly. Outwardly he is Gentile, he is part of this world of sinful flesh. What is born from here below is always part of this world. It is not the earthly father and mother, be they of pure Jewish blood, that brings forth the Church. They only bring forth the world. And that we are born in the covenant sphere does not mean yet that we are covenant

children. All those born in the covenant sphere as well as those born outside of that covenant sphere, according to their flesh are not the church but the world. In the physical sense of the word we are not only in the world but also of the world. And that we are of the world is not only a physical distinction but also a spiritual one. My flesh is as much a part of this world as the flesh of Cain, Nimrod, Pharaoh, Pilate and Nero. Therefore it is to be understood that with my flesh I commit the same sins that the world commits. David's murder was not different from Cain's. There is no such thing as a Christian murder. David's murder and my hatred in my heart are sins of the world as well as Herod's and Nero's murder.

For that reason we find so much of the world's sin in our own daily lives. We find that we are children of our age also in a spiritual sense. A few examples of this worldliness in our lives is not out of place. There was a time in a different age when the godless entertainment of the world went under the name of *shows*. How it was emphasized and stressed that to go to shows was of the devil. And we did not go. Then along comes radio and television with their spiritually corrupt programs which have nothing of the fear of the Lord in them. And these programs true to style and correctly expressing their ethical character are also called shows. Yet children of our age that we are, how frequently do we not hear church members, confessing members in the church of Jesus Christ, and their children asking each other whether last night they saw this show on TV or heard that show on the radio? Where are we going? What has happened to us? God have mercy upon us as we reveal ourselves to be children of our age, and when our flesh as part of this world seeks the entertainment of the world!

O, but you say, That is only a word. There is nothing ethical in a word. We have borrowed a word that the unbeliever uses for his entertainment, but what we look at and what we hear is not really a show in that evil sense in which it was formerly used.

Whom are you trying to deceive?

Who calls them by that name? Is it not the same world whose entertainment we might not seek before because our parents and grandparents, who at that time were children of another age, saw things correctly? Has that wicked world improved and is that why their shows today are quite all right for the believer to seek? Are the days of the antichrist not coming now because that world is getting spiritually better and better? Their programs of murder, rape, adultery, theft, rebellion against authorities, idolatry and blasphemy; the cursing and swearing they utter so profusely; the mockery of things spiritual; their lewd jokes and indecent dress speak quite a different testimony.

How much a child of this age are you?

How much do you intend to try to defend the world and its entertainment?

John says, "Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world," I John 2:15, 16. The world is wicked, but John makes a point of it that there are wicked things also in the world. Sin does not consist in things. But there surely are sinful things, things that can never be used without sinning against God. The sin is always in the heart of man. But there are things which the world in its lust of the flesh, its lust of the eyes, and its pride of life creates for sinful practices and which the heart of man cannot use without sinning against God. And the worldly show is one of them. There is entertainment designed, given and sponsored by the world into which it always pours its own spiritually corrupt philosophy and standards. These THINGS are sin. And a child of God cannot seek and enjoy them without sinning.

Let us not take the words of the world, to which they themselves give content, and which they choose for their own lustful purposes to designate their carnal pleasures, and then try to deceive ourselves that the entertainment is harmless and that the word they choose for it after all does not have an evil content to it. The shows of the age in which we live are not less corrupt than the shows we condemned in another age gone by. And seeking the shows of the world today, whether that be on the screen in the theatre, on the screen in the drive-in-theatre, on the television screen or the radio, is sin and nothing but sin. The fear of the Lord will have nothing to do with any of it.

Paul writes, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God." And he concludes by saying, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you." II Corinthians 6:14-17.

We have more to say in this respect and more examples to give to show that we are children of the age in which we live, but this will have to wait until later. Consider all this in His fear.

J.A.H.

Now, therefore, who will lead us on
Sin's strongholds to possess?
No longer cast us off, O God,
But give our hosts success.

Give Thou Thy help against the foe,
For help of man is vain;
Through God we shall do valiantly,
The victory He shall gain.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

FORMAL PRINCIPLE

(continued)

It can hardly be denied that the Mysticism of the Middle Ages and at the time of the Reformation was a reaction which set in because of certain characteristics which marked this period. There was, first of all, the great development of the Latin or Western Church and of the Roman hierarchy. This age was characterized by the mighty Roman Church, its worship and formulated doctrines, as well as all its superstitions, corruptions and power; the power of the Roman pontiff, as he claimed to be not only the spiritual head and leader of the Church in the midst of the world and also the temporal ruler of the earth, and as he claimed to rule over Church and State, to have the authority to enthrone and dethrone kings and monarchs was simply fantastic. The Church, and I speak of the clergy, claimed the right to dominate men's hearts and minds, to dictate what every man was permitted to teach and believe, simply exercised a strangle hold upon the souls and bodies of men. And as this Church grew in power and in authority it also increased in sin and corruption. Secondly, especially toward the close of the Middle Ages (the Middle Ages embrace the period from approximately the sixth century to the Reformation) we may speak of the development of learning. Intellectual activity was awakened in the minds of many. This was manifested in the multiplication of the seats of learning, in the number of teachers, and also in the great multitudes of students by which these schools were attended. An interest was taken by all the classes of people in various subjects of learned discussion. This revival of learning and culture was inseparably connected with that great movement which is known in history as the Crusades, a movement which covered approximately two hundred years. We must remember that the people of the Eastern Empire and of the eastern countries were far more civilized and advanced in learning than the people of the Western empire, Western Europe. Contact with the Orient, the Far East, through the Crusades, surely stimulated the mental life of the people in the various countries of Western Europe. Hence, from the twelfth century on the medieval darkness of Western Europe was gradually being dispelled. Many universities sprang up in Italy, Germany, France, and England. These universities could boast of teachers of great learning and mental acumen, such as Anselm, Abelard, Peter the Lombard, Albertus Magnus,

Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus. There was a great revival of learning and culture. And a third characteristic of this period was a widespread and variously manifested movement of Mysticism, the inner life of the Church, protesting against the formalism, the corruption and the tyranny of the external Church.

We cannot, of course, treat at length and in details the many mystics in the period before and during the time of the Reformation. Such a discussion could become too long and tedious. Some of the mystics, prior to the Reformation, were pantheistic in their conceptions. Of these pantheistic mystics, the most distinguished and influential is said to have been a Henry Eckart. His teachings were condemned by the pope, although the pope's decision was not announced until after his death. Eckart maintained that God is the only being; that the universe is the self-manifestation of God; that the highest destiny of man is to come to the consciousness of his identity with God. Another distinguished and influential mystic of the same class was a certain John Ruysbroeck, although there are those who question his pantheistic tendencies, who doubt whether he was pantheistic in his conceptions.

The reaction which set in in the form of Mysticism as at the time of the Reformation is surely understandable. A statement from Hodge is interesting in this connection. He writes as follows in his Systematic Theology, Vol. I, page 80, and we quote: "Such a great and general movement of the public mind as occurred during the sixteenth century, when the old foundations of doctrine and order in the Church were overturned, could hardly fail to be attended by irregularities and extravagancies in the inward and outward life of the people. There are two principles advanced, both Scriptural and both of the last importance, which are specially liable to abuse in times of popular excitement.

The first is, the right of private judgment. This, as understood by the Reformers, is the right of every man to decide what a revelation made by God to him, requires him to believe. It was a protest against the authority assumed by the Church (i.e. the Bishops), of deciding for the people what they were to believe. It was very natural that the fanatical, in rejecting the authority of the Church, should reject all external authority in matters of religion. They understood by the right of private judgment, the right of every man to determine what he should believe from the operations of his own mind and from his own inward experience, independently of the Scriptures. But as it is palpably absurd to expect, on such a subject as religion, a certainty either satisfactory to our selves or authoritative for others, from our own reason or feelings, it was inevitable that these subjective convictions should be referred to a supernatural source. Private revelations, an inward light, the testimony of the Spirit, came to be exalted over the authority of the Bible.

Secondly, the Reformers taught that religion is a matter of the heart, that a man's acceptance with God does not depend on his membership in any external society, on obe-

dience to its officers, and on sedulous observance of its rites and ordinances; but on the regeneration of his heart, and his personal faith in the Son of God, manifesting itself in a holy life. This was a protest against the fundamental principle of Romanism, that all within the external organization which Romanists call the Church, are saved, and all out of it are lost. It is not a matter of surprise that evil men should wrest this principle, as they do all other truths, to their own destruction. Because religion does not consist in externals, many rushed to the conclusion that externals — the Church, its ordinances, its officers, its worship — were of no account. These principles were soon applied beyond the sphere of religion. Those who regarded themselves as the organs of God, emancipated from the authority of the Bible and exalted above the Church, came to claim exemption from the authority of the State. To this outbreak the grievous and long-continued oppression of the peasantry greatly contributed, so that this spirit of fanaticism and revolt rapidly spread over all Germany, and into Switzerland and Holland.” — end of quote from Hodge. In other words, stating this briefly as has been done in the past, when the people were delivered from the shackles of Roman Catholicism, it also gave men the opportunity to reveal themselves; and this also means that also all the evil that is ever present in the human heart was now given the opportunity to reveal itself. That Protestantism broke up into so many fragments, so many different “Protestant” churches, is not because the Word of God is not sufficiently clear in its setting forth of the truth, but only because the human heart resents and rejects the clear testimony of the Word of God.

It is undoubtedly true that few words have been used in such a vague, indefinite sense as Mysticism. A mystic was one who was considered to have been initiated into the knowledge of the Greek mysteries, one to whom secret things had been revealed. Hence, a Mystic was one who claimed to know things hidden from other men, whether this knowledge be attained by immediate intuition or by inward revelation. And so a mystic was one who claimed to be under the immediate guidance of God or of His Spirit. Mysticism assigns more importance to the feelings than to the intellect. We may say that the fundamental process of all Mysticism is to give precedence to the emotional rather than to the intellectual element of the human mind. This is considered to be the common ground of all Mysticism.

A form of Mysticism which was prevalent during this time in the history of the Church in Spain and in Italy was known as Quietism. The followers of this movement were not pantheistic in their conception, did not believe that the human soul was finally absorbed into the substance of God. They did believe that the end to be attained was union with God. By this they did not mean what is commonly understood by the Church of God. We must maintain, of course, that the end and purpose of all true religion is union, fellowship with the alone and ever blessed God. But this union with God they regarded as a matter of feeling, not something

to be understood or explained, a state in which all thought, all activity was suspended, a state of perfect quietude in which the soul is lost in God. The importance of the Scriptures, of prayer and of the sacraments, and of the truth concerning Christ was not denied; but all these were regarded as belonging to the lower stages of the divine life. All conscious self-activity must be suspended in order to attain unto this perfect rest in God.

The most permanent and best organized representatives of the principles of Mysticism which appeared in the Church are undoubtedly the Quakers or Friends. They have now existed as an organized society nearly two hundred and fifty years, and number in Europe and America several hundred thousands.

They took their origin and name from George Fox who was born in England in 1624. He received only the rudiments of an English education and was by trade a shoemaker. He felt himself called by God, by direct revelation and inspiration, to denounce the existing Church, its organization and officers, and to proclaim a new and spiritual dispensation. This dispensation was designed as a restoration of the apostolic age, when the Church was guided and extended by the Spirit, without the interventions of the written Word, or, as Fox and his followers maintained, of a special order of ministers, but every man and every woman spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. They were called Quakers either because they themselves trembled when under the influence of the Spirit, or because they were in the habit of calling on those whom they addressed to quake in fear of the judgment of God. This designation, however, has long since ceased to be appropriate, as they are characteristically quiet in their worship, and gentle toward those who are without. They call themselves Friends because they are opposed to violence, contention, and especially to war. At first, however, they were chargeable with many irregularities, which, in connection with their refusing to pay tithes, take oaths, and to perform military service, gave pretext to frequent and long continued persecutions. The Lord willing, we will continue with this in our following article.

H.V.

O God, from Thee the waters fled,
The depths were moved with mighty dread,
The swelling clouds their torrents poured,
And o'er the earth the tempest roared;
'Mid lightning's flash and thunder's sound
Great trembling shook the solid ground.

Thy way was in the sea, O God,
Through mighty waters, deep and broad;
None understood but God alone,
To man Thy footsteps were unknown;
But safe Thy people Thou didst keep,
Almighty Shepherd of Thy sheep.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

CONCLUSION

Let us briefly take notice of the various calumnies against the Reformed doctrine of predestination that are mentioned in this Conclusion. It is not our purpose in this connection to explain all these false charges in detail and to refute them. This has been done in connection with the *Canons* themselves. In fact, in many cases our *Canons* literally face these same charges and refute them. Here, therefore, we shall simply cite these errors, and point out how and where our fathers, in the body of the *Canons*, dealt with them.

The first two charges are closely related; in fact, we may say that they constitute one charge from two different points of view. They are: 1) That the doctrine of the Reformed churches concerning predestination, and the points annexed to it, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads off (leads away) the minds of men from all piety and religion. 2) That it is an opiate administered by the flesh and the devil, and the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all; and from which he wounds multitudes and mortally strikes through many with the darts both of despair and security. This second statement, by the way, is far from literal. It is the expression which has occurred before, "a cushion, or couch, for the flesh," in the Dutch, "*een oorkussen voor het vlees*." It may readily be seen that these two charges really aim at presenting the Reformed doctrine as an *immoral doctrine*, contrary to godliness and religion, and for that reason also a wicked doctrine practically speaking, because it leads to despair and carnal security, and is therefore nothing less than a cunning device of the devil to ensnare God's people. Over against these and like charges the *Canons* testify as far as the doctrine of predestination itself is concerned in the First Head of Doctrine, Articles 9, 12, 13, and in the Rejection of Errors, Articles 5 and 7. As far as the other heads of doctrine ("the points annexed to it") are concerned, we have seen repeatedly how our fathers faced this objection. We may mention especially III and IV, A, Articles 11, 12, 16, 17, and V, A, Articles 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and V, B, 6.

The next slander concerns God Himself: "that it makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical." Over against this charge we would mention especially *Canons* I, A, 15, 16, and 18, and III and IV, 8 and 9.

The "Conclusion" next cites the calumny that the Re-

formed doctrine "is nothing more than interpolated Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, Turcism." These four "isms," the first of which is a Graeco-Roman philosophy that was current in the apostles' time, the second a type of Gnosticism which made its appearance in the ancient period of church history, the third an immoral counterfeit of Christian liberty which appeared in the Geneva of Calvin's time, and the fourth referring to the Turkish Mohammedan doctrine — these four agree in two respects: they are all fatalistic in their view, and they all are alike opposed to all true morality. By *interpolated* is meant that the Reformed doctrine is merely the doctrine of Stoicism, etc., in a modified form, in a new garb. From the above it is plain that the two following charges belong with this one: 1) "that it renders men carnally secure, since they are persuaded by it that nothing can hinder the salvation of the elect, let them live as they please; and therefore, that they may safely perpetrate every species of the most atrocious crimes"; and, 2) "that, if the reprobate should even perform truly all the works of the saints, their obedience would not in the least contribute to their salvation." To mention these charges is to expose their evil and slanderous nature. Anyone who knows the Reformed truth as set forth in our *Canons* knows that there is no slightest resemblance between our Reformed doctrine of predestination and these calumnies. And the various articles of our *Canons* which we have already mentioned above make it abundantly clear that this is true.

The same is true of the next evil charge: "that the same doctrine teaches, that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation; and, has created them for this very purpose; that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and the cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety." There are Reformed people today who are afraid of the true Reformed view of reprobation and who are afraid of this calumny that was brought already against our fathers' doctrine. And therefore they speak of a "modified" doctrine of predestination, which really makes reprobation, and, with it necessarily also election, conditional. They maintain that a *sovereign* election and reprobation is arbitrary. This is nothing new, of course. And we must remember that this calumny of the Arminians will never be registered against any view that denies the sovereignty of predestination. Our fathers did not face this charge and answer it by teaching that reprobation was in some way *because of* sin. Nor did they place sin outside of the sovereign counsel of the Most High. Nor, by any means, did they make reprobation the fountain and cause of sin just as election is the fountain and cause of every saving good. They did maintain that the decree of reprobation is out of God's sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure. And they did maintain, as infralapsarians, that God decreed to leave the reprobate in the common misery into which they have wilfully plunged themselves. And over against this charge of

arbitrariness they teach very plainly that when God decrees to cause the reprobate to be condemned and to perish forever, He does this *in the way of* their own sin and unbelief. This is very plainly taught in Article 15 of the First Head of Doctrine. And again, both this charge of arbitrariness and this false presentation of the relation between reprobation and the sins of the reprobate are clearly contradicted in the further treatment by Article 16: "But this doctrine is justly terrible to those, who, regardless of God and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God."

And finally, the very wicked — because of its sentimental appeal — charge is mentioned: "that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers' breasts, and tyrannically plunged into hell; so that neither baptism, nor the prayers of the Church at their baptism can at all profit by them." We may cite over against this calumny, first of all, the often-discussed Article 17 of the First Head: "Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy." Does this careful and quiet statement of the truth sound at all like the vicious calumny of the Arminians? And besides, who can bring such a charge as this without denying the age-old doctrine of original guilt? For note that these children are pictured as "guiltless" in this accusation. Hence, we may also mention *Canons* III, IV, A, 1-3 in answer to this charge.

When one takes the time to consider these charges and to observe that it is indeed true that the Reformed churches neither "acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul" all of them, then one can also understand how it is possible that our fathers charged their opponents with violating "all truth, equity, and charity." The Arminians slandered the truth; they presented a grossly unfair picture of the Reformed doctrine in their charges, and thus violated all equity; and they, who attempted to sound so lovely and sentimental, violated all genuine charity in so doing, because charity seeks truth.

The next section of the "Conclusion" is an earnest exhortation to the faithful, that is, to "as many as piously call upon the name of our Savior Jesus Christ," given "in the name of the Lord" to judge the doctrine of the Reformed churches from the confessions and from the *Canons*. There is a bit of history connected with this section. Originally, this "Conclusion" was to contain only a rejection of the Arminians' calumnies against the truth. Later, however, it was proposed that some of the strong expressions of certain Reformed teachers also be included and condemned. The Synod refused to do this for three reasons. In the first

place, they felt that no occasion should be given for a condemnation of sound doctrine through association with some of these improper expressions. In the second place, it was maintained that the Holy Spirit Himself uses some such strong expressions in the Scriptures. And, in the third place, it was felt that many of these expressions, if viewed charitably, could be very well explained. Hence, the Synod makes reference to this matter in a different way, and emphasizes: 1) That the Reformed faith is not to be judged from the calumnies above cited. 2) That it is not even to be judged from the private expressions of a few teachers — whether ancient or modern — especially since these expressions are often dishonestly quoted (something which is very simply done through the mere device of quoting out of context), or are corrupted and twisted to mean something quite foreign to their intention. 3) But that if any wishes to know and to judge properly the doctrine of the Reformed churches, the only fair way to do so is from the public and officially adopted doctrinal expressions of those churches, namely, from their confessions, including the *Canons* themselves.

The next section contains a warning to the calumniators. The Synod charges them with a heavy responsibility indeed, and evinces a different spirit than that of many compromisers of today, who glibly speak of ecumenicity. The Synod reminds these evil opponents of the deeply serious fact that they must one day face the Judge of heaven and earth, the God of His church. And it charges them with a three-fold sin. In the first place, they are guilty of bearing false witness against the confessions not only of the Dutch church, but of many churches which in that day held the same faith. In the second place, they are guilty by their opposition to the truth and their calculated slander of the truth of distressing the consciences of those who are weak in the faith. And, in the third place, they are guilty of trying to put the truly faithful in an evil light, trying to present them as false teachers and heretics, and of thus attempting to place them under suspicion.

The last section of this "Conclusion" is an exhortation to the brethren to use this true doctrine aright. We need not enlarge on this because the *Canons* themselves also reflect on this matter more than once. The general thrust of this admonition is that the truth must be handled piously and religiously. This includes the following elements: 1) Both in teaching and in preaching this truth must be used to the glory of God, unto holiness of life, and unto the consolation of afflicted souls. 2) The standard of such proper use of this doctrine is the Scripture; and the Scripture must control not only our views, but also our language. 3) We must beware that we observe the proper limits of Holy Scripture, and thus abstain from excessive language in the exposition of the Word of God, lest we furnish the opponents with a just pretext for attacking and vilifying the doctrine of the Reformed churches. Suffice it to say that our fathers did not

(Continued on page 95)

DECENCY and ORDER

The Formula of Subscription

Article 53, D.K.O.

In their commentary on the Church Order, Monsma and Van Dellen sound a warning against certain serious dangers in revising or changing established forms of the churches, such as our Formula of Subscription which every office bearer is required to sign. They also give an illustration in which they show what may be the result of such changes. On page 226 of their book we find the following quotation:

"In times of laxity and doctrinal indifference or in days when under-currents of error seem to be present, the churches should be very careful not to revise their Form of Subscription to their own hurt. A classic example of the need of vigilance on this score is the change which was introduced into the Form of Subscription by the churches of Holland in 1816. A slight change was introduced into the old form of subscription drafted by the great Synod of Dort (1618-19). According to the old form prospective ministers by signing declared that they believed that the Three Forms of Unity agreed altogether with the Word of God. (Our Form reads: we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confessions . . . do fully agree with the Word of God. — G.v.d.B.) According to the new reading of 1816, these prospective ministers declared that they accepted the doctrines contained in the Three Forms of Unity, which agreed with the holy Word of God. The phrase in question was made to read: ' . . . de leer, welke *overeenkomstig* Gods heilig Woord in de aangenomen Formulieren van Eenigheid is vervat, ter goeder trouw aan te nemen en hartelijk te gelooven.'

"This sounds good enough but it left a loop-hole. The question soon arose whether the '*overeenkomstig*' had the significance of *omdat* (quia) 'because,' or *voor zoover* (quatenus) 'in as far.' Those who wanted to be loyal to the Word of God and the Reformed faith held that the latter interpretation was possible and also intended by the leaders of the revision group. Some denied this charge vigorously. But in 1835 one of the leaders admitted that the change had been sponsored and made so that a candidate could sign the Form of Subscription even if he did not fully agree with the Standards of the Churches. He who signs this document in Holland today merely declares that he will be loyal to the Three Forms of Unity in as far as these agree with the Word of God. The result is that even Unitarians and Communists can become Ministers of the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands. The Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland, the purified and reorganized Reformed Churches of Holland, as might be expected, immediately readopted the unequivocal

Form of Subscription of Dort, 1618-19. Heretics cannot consistently sign this Form."

Someone might object that this is "word-quibbling." The same objector, however, will also have to admit that the careless use of or intentional misuse of a single word can open the way for heretics of every hue to spoil the church through vicious prevarication of the truth. This all reminds us of the theologian who insisted that the simple statement, "The Bible is the Word of God," must be altered to read, "The Word of God is in the Bible." At first glance the difference in the two statements appears to be negligible. Both contain the same words. The only difference is that the order of the subject and the predicate nominative is reversed and the latter statement has the addition of the word "in." Close analysis, however, shows that one can subscribe to the latter statement and literally reject ninety-nine percent of the Bible's content as being anything but the Word of God. Any heretic could readily subscribe to it but the former statement is exact and can only mean that the complete and entire Scripture is of Divine origin.

Any change, therefore, in our forms of subscription must certainly be free from any dubiousness so that those who are asked to sign them understand clearly the pledge which they make before God.

In his "Church Right," the Rev. G. M. Ophoff raises an interesting question in connection with the matter of signing the Formula of Subscription. He suggests the possibility that the signing of this form, with its promises and declarations, is incompatible with the exercise of the individual's freedom of conscience. Consider that what the subscriber promises is that he will do as the Formula requires under a severe penalty, namely, immediate suspension from office, in case he violates this pledge. This is interesting because it so often happens that those who become disloyal to the established faith and so violate their subscription promise do not readily acknowledge their guilt in violating their oath but rather seek to justify their error with the pious cry that they may not violate their conscience. Their implied argument is that it is a higher duty to obey their conscience than to keep the pledge of signing the Formula of Subscription. Apart from the fact that this whole argument is based on a faulty conception of conscience, we may say that it is as ridiculous as it is false. It is not the conscience that the heretic seeks to obey but the carnal mind and will that refuses to subject themselves to the Word of God. When one treads this path he inadvertently encounters a severe conflict with his previously made promise to abide by the doctrines of Scripture as set forth in the Confessions of the church.

Is there not, however, the possibility of and room for serious differences arising in one's mind concerning some of the doctrines to which one has previously committed himself by signing the Form of Subscription? If this be granted, does not the promise to teach and faithfully defend these

doctrines ask too much? Would it not be far better not to ever have made such a promise than, having made it, to find oneself in a position where this promise cannot be kept because of certain disagreements which have arisen? Isn't it better to simply request that office bearers maintain and defend certain doctrines insofar as they are able to do so in good conscience before God?

Rev. Ophoff says, "This really means that what the subscriber promises is that he will preach and defend the doctrine contained in the creeds involved, and refrain from militating against this doctrine by preaching and writing only as long as he can do so with a good conscience before God, but that, if this is no longer possible he will cease to preach and defend the said doctrine and agree that by that very act he is suspended from his office, has suspended himself from office. Mark you well, the Classis or Consistory does not depose that office bearer but they simply declare what he through his act of refusal has done. He has deposed himself. And by subscribing to the Formula, the minister agreed that this act of refusal should have this significance."

This is undoubtedly true. An office bearer who does not agree with the Confessions of a given church should not remain in office in that church. Moreover, such an individual, if his convictions mean anything at all, will not desire to remain in that church even as a member. He certainly may not remain in office in the church and openly militate against the confessions of the church in order to destroy her as some have attempted to do in our churches.

We agree, therefore, with this quotation of Rev. Ophoff when it is applied, as it should be, to one who has made himself guilty of breach of promise. However, we feel that something else should be added here. When a person who has signed the Formula of Subscription later finds himself in disagreement with the doctrines he promised to defend, he is certainly confronted with a difficult problem. He must either defend what he himself does not believe to be true (a moral impossibility) or he must violate his promise (a serious evil). By doing the latter, he, by that very act, deposes himself from office. However, this is not the only recourse. The Formula of Subscription itself points him to and provides for him the only proper and orderly course to follow. He must, of course, present his grievances to his consistory, classes and synod. He must submit to the judgment rendered in each case and if, after the final verdict is rendered in his case, he is unable to acquiesce, he must be suspended and deposed from his office. Within a certain denomination the office bearer is bound to uphold the confessions of that church but he is at liberty to leave that denomination if he is unable to do so in good conscience before God.

From this it should be evident that the demand of the church that her office-bearers sign a formula of agreement is both just and necessary. To deny this is to destroy the very possibility of the existence of the denomination. The

Church Order Commentary states that, "Doctrinal unity forms the foundation for denomination unity." To hold that nothing or mere generalities in regard to doctrine is binding and to allow all sorts of divergent views within the church is to invite chaos. Did we not almost realize that doctrinal chaos in our churches when some attempted to teach and preach the anti-confessional doctrine of the general conditional promise of salvation? If this had been condoned — and we may humbly thank God that it was not — what would prevent others from teaching and preaching the well-meant offer of salvation to all? This, in turn, could be followed by the introduction of the errors of the Baptists, various shades of Dispensationalism, as well as all kinds of denials of the cardinal truths of Scripture expressed in our Three Forms of Unity and if there was no binding agreement, nothing could be done about it.

It might be argued that these extremes are so obviously contrary to the Reformed Confessions that no one would attempt to introduce them into a church that stands on the basis of those confessions. This argument does not hold, however, because in the first place the heresy of a general conditional promise of salvation or the well-known Three Points of '24 are just as obviously anti-confessional and, in the second place, men have attempted with measures of success to introduce more than one of these rank errors in churches that hold the Reformed Confessions but have disregarded the binding character of the truth expressed in them.

Hence, to maintain her doctrinal purity and so preserve true denominational unity the Formula of Subscription must be elevated to its proper place in the church and the church must insist that each and every office bearer solemnly promise to faithfully maintain the truth expressed in the Confessions.

G.V.d.B.

ATTENTION CONSISTORIES

The following "Forms" are available and may be obtained by writing undersigned. When ordering, kindly specify the number of the particular form ordered is desired.

1. Classical Credential Forms
2. Synodical Subsidy Forms (Revised 1960)
3. Transfer of Membership Forms
4. Transfer of Baptized Member Forms
5. Certificates of Dismissal
6. Call Letters
7. Ministerial Certificate of Dismissal and Testimonial
8. Synodical Credentials

REV. G. VANDEN BERG, *Stated Clerk*
Synod of the Prot. Ref. Churches
9402 So. 53rd Court
Oak Lawn, Illinois

ALL AROUND US

An Important Synod

Two issues ago in *The Standard Bearer* we reported the matter of an overture from Rev. M. Gritters in which he sought an early Synod of the Churches who left us for the purpose of discussing the question of an immediate return to the Christian Reformed Church. Classis West approved of this overture and contacted Classis East to make the arrangements for such a Synod. Classis East concurred in the decision of Classis West and this early Synod met in Grand Rapids October 26 through October 28.

Although there were other matters appearing on the agenda of the Synod besides the matter of returning to the Christian Reformed Church, this latter matter occupied most of Synod's time. It is not necessary or possible to give a detailed report of all the motions that appeared on the Synod. It is sufficient to say that a motion to seek immediate return to the Christian Reformed Church failed by a tie vote. This motion was to answer the letter of the Christian Reformed Church with the substance of an overture from Classis East which advised Synod to take immediate steps to effect such a return. The motion that did carry instead, by a vote of 9 to 7, was a motion to send another letter to the Christian Reformed Church in which the Synod requested the Christian Reformed Church to "consider again that our churches unite on the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity." This implies, of course, that once again the Christian Reformed Church is asked to declare the "Three Points of 1924" to be without binding force in the denomination.

The grounds given for this request were three in number. Briefly summarized, they were: 1) Such a basis for union will have a wholesome effect upon other efforts to unite with other Church bodies in the strivings of the Church world towards ecumenicity. 2) To unite in any other way will probably result in the splintering of the Churches since all their people are not prepared to return. 3) The Declaration of Unity, read at the opening of each Synod, mentions that the Church stands on the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity, and that these Churches who agree to this Declaration "desire to receive into (their) communion everyone that agrees to (their) confession."

The conclusion of the matter is, therefore, that the movement to return to the Christian Reformed Church failed on the synodical level. Those men of the Churches who left ours and who were in favor of such a return were defeated on the Synod by a tie vote.

One cannot help but think of the historical irony of it all, for in the Synods of 1952 and 1953, just preceding the split in our Churches, the functioning of the Synod was hampered also by such a tie vote. At that time, Classis West

opposed the Declaration of Principles and stymied the entire Synod by repeated use of the tie vote. Now their own efforts to return to the Christian Reformed Church are hamstrung by the same tie vote they once used.

Although the efforts to return synodically failed, it was evidently clear on the Synod that this would not prevent those ministers and elders and people who wanted to return from carrying out their wishes. If they cannot return synodically, they will certainly return individually. Hull, for example, already informed their Synod that they had made overtures to Classis Sioux Center of the Christian Reformed Church to return to them.

It is also evident from the letter addressed to the Christian Reformed Church, in which they speak of the danger of splintering their denomination by returning without a retraction of the Three Points, that there are many of their people who will not go back to a denomination that maintains the heresy of Common Grace. The tragedy of the whole matter is that these people are being forsaken by their leaders — sheep without a shepherd. We know that seven years have gone by since these people have left us, and seven years of history have been made. But we hope and pray that they may still see that their only hope for themselves and their children is to return to us.

Finally, we cannot understand completely why there is hesitation on the part of their Synod to return to the Christian Reformed Church. On a previous Synod they stated that they no longer consider the Three Points to be Arminian and Pelagian. This they again reiterate in their last letter. "We reiterate our stand, expressed in our letter of 1960, that we no longer charge the Three Points with being Arminian and Pelagian, nor are we pleading for freedom to agitate and to cause turmoil and strife in the churches. We are opposed to agitation, propaganda or any unseemly or revolutionary action in the church. We are sorry for such actions of the past as we have pointed out in our letter of 1960." If the Three Points are not Pelagian and Arminian, they must be Reformed. If they are Reformed, they must be the truth of Scripture. If they are the truth of Scripture, what could possibly stand in the way of Synod's embracing them and returning again to the Church from which they were expelled because of them? That one statement that they are not Arminian destroys the last barrier to organic church union. I cannot see any other conclusion.

Church Membership in the United States

Several periodicals have recently carried articles which contain statistics of the recently published "Yearbook of American Churches for 1961" published by the National Council of Churches.

These statistics show that although the population of the United States has increased 1.8% during 1959, Church membership arose only .4%. Total Church membership in this country now stands at 112,226,905 in 254 different

religious bodies. The Churches gained 2,669,164 new members, with 63.4% of the total population of the United States now belonging to some Church or other. There are 62,543,502 Protestants, 40,871,302 Catholics, 5,500,000 Jews, 20,000 Buddhists. The Catholic Church has shown a considerably larger rate of growth than Protestant Churches since Catholics are up 3.4% over last year, while Protestants are up 1.7%. The largest group of Protestant Churches is the Baptist group with 20,879,220 in 27 denominations, while the largest single denomination is the Methodist Church with 9,815,460 members.

It is striking, to say the least, that along with this growth in Church membership there has been a much greater and even alarming rise in crime and juvenile delinquency. The sale of all kinds of obscene literature has also risen sharply in recent years, while all forms of entertainment, as it degenerates morally, is at an all time high.

Anyone can notice, even on his way to Church on Sunday, that in spite of the increase in Church membership, there is little observance of the Sabbath left. We live in an age in which people feel the need of belonging to some Church, but to whom Church membership means nothing. We live in times of increased crime and evil, days in which men are entertainment-mad, a period of doctrinal lethargy and sloth, spiritual decline and moral degeneracy. And all this while Church membership continues to soar. One cannot help but think of the words of Paul to Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: . . . Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." II Timothy 3:1, 2, 4, 7.

Political Pronouncements

There has been a growing trend in our day for denominations and for councils of Churches to make pronouncements on all kinds of political, moral and social questions. When these Churches come together in their broadest gatherings, or when committees of various Councils of Churches meet, they cannot resist the temptation to pass motions which spell out their position on all and every kind of issue.

Within the recent past, the National Council of Churches raised a storm of protest and controversy with its decision to go on record as favoring the admittance of Red China into the United Nations.

Recently more Churches have followed this general trend. The largest Lutheran body in the United States — the 2,500,000-member United Lutheran Church in America — held its 22nd biennial convention in Atlantic City recently. This convention is briefly reported in *Time* magazine. Among other things, 700 clerical and lay delegates decided against the testing of nuclear weapons, calling for "such forms of peaceful cooperation and competitive coexistence with the Communist world as will oppose and seek to overcome the total-

itarian concept of control." Also they rejected the resolution calling for a ban on capital punishment by the slender margin of 248 to 238.

The United Church of Canada which was formed through mergers of the country's Methodists, Congregationalists, and some 70% of its Presbyterians, and which numbers better than 1,000,000 members, passed similar resolutions. They condoned birth control, suggested that Canada align itself with the world's neutralist nations, renounced nuclear war, reaffirmed their opinion that the Canadian government should give recognition to Red China and support its admission into the United Nations, urged the abolition of capital punishment.

Decisions such as these must be a reflection of the preaching on the pulpits of much of the Church world. Less and less is the Word of God heard from the pulpits of the land, and more and more do ministers with the evident approval of their consistories and congregations speak rather on every conceivable kind of social and political problem, while moralizing in general and vague ways for the "betterment" of their constituency.

It is no wonder that the spiritual decline of Church life in the world and specifically in our own country is hastening. The Church has only the one calling to preach the Word of God. And in as much as it fails to do this, it loses its right to be called Church. It is really no wonder that people no longer care to go to Church while keeping their names on the membership rolls. It is no wonder that a cold and deathly materialism has gripped the Churches of America. It is not at all surprising that indifference and lethargy, tolerance and ambiguity have fallen like a pall upon the Churches about us. The Church has no business making pronouncements and resolutions concerning all these matters, and continues to do so to her own grave peril.

Our fathers, with good reason, included in our Church Order Article 30 which reads, "In these assemblies (consistories, classes and synods) ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner . . ."

While all these Churches are deathly afraid of the interference of government in the Church-life, and while they cry loud and long for the separation between Church and state, they continue themselves to deny this principle in practice, and, meddling in the affairs of the state, they try to take over the reins of government and make decisions affecting domestic and foreign policy.

Our Churches must ever be on their guard that they do not fall into this deadly habit of making decisions on matters other than ecclesiastical. And this will be done, if from our pulpits our ministers continue faithfully to preach the Word of God and apply the eternal principles of that Word to the lives of God's people, so that they know that they must walk here below as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

H. Hanko

CONTRIBUTIONS

Hull Welcomes New Pastor

In the early days of November, 1959, the congregation learned that our pastor, Rev. J. Heys, had accepted the call from our sister congregation of South Holland, Illinois. It meant that we as a congregation would have to face that period of calling, waiting, learning of decisions — perhaps repeated over and over again.

We immediately set out to find the man of God's choosing. As consistory we made a trio and on Nov. 27 called Rev. G. Vanden Berg. We soon learned that it was not the Lord's will for him "to come over and help us."

By then we had bid farewell to Rev. Heys and family. With hearts filled with deep appreciation for his years of faithful service, the Word still written deeply upon them, we saw him leave to labor in another flock.

A short time before we asked the Seminary for the services of student J. Kortering during the holiday season. He came into our midst for the first time on Christmas Eve to share the Christmas program with us. During his stay he preached for us seven times.

Soon after his departure we called Rev. C. Hanco who also declined. On February 24 we extended a call to Rev. R. Veldman, who could not arrive at a decision for us "mutually gratifying." Our attention next centered on Rev. M. Schipper who received our call on April 7. He too could not heed our call.

By July 3, candidate Kortering was eligible for a call. At the congregational meeting of July 13 he was elected and the call-letter was sent on its way. Patiently we waited for six weeks, till on August 24 the letter of acceptance arrived.

Being vacant for approximately 9 months, our church was again sent another undershepherd by the Lord.

Looking back over that period of time we are deeply grateful above all to our God who so abundantly provided for us. Our cry of victory is "Ebenezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped us." There were times when our hopes were high, but also times when we were discouraged. Through it all, God has provided for the needs of our congregation.

The hand of the Lord often works through means. In our period of vacancy we have experienced this over and over. Especially are we mindful of our counselor, Rev. G. Van Baren. He has helped us in so many ways: leading many consistory and congregational meetings, giving us advice, teaching catechism classes, preaching many Sunday evenings even though it meant that he would have to preach three times. We express our thanks to him for his faithful concern over us. We have also enjoyed classical supply. Rev. Woudenberg came on various occasions from Edgerton and

preached on Sunday evenings, and of course our elders had their turns at reading. Through these various means we have been richly blessed by our covenant God.

Now that our pastor is settled here, having been welcomed at a reception Sept. 16 and ordained on Sept. 22, we are busily engaged in another year of activities. Being thankful to God for sending to us this youthful servant who may now lead us in the green pastures of His Word, we look back and forward with the confidence that God is good to us.

Consistory of Hull Prot. Ref. Church

J. Hoekstra, Clerk

A Letter from Canada

11 Pineglen Crescent,
Box 475, R. R. No. 2,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada,

October 24, 1960

The Editor

The Standard Bearer

1139 Franklin St., S. E.

Grand Rapids 7, Mich.

Dear Sir,

I am possibly your most recent subscriber to *The Standard Bearer*. I have seen only three copies beginning with September 1, 1960, and am perhaps a bit presumptuous to write a letter to you about the contents of your magazine.

The subject that has prompted me to write is the question that is apparently before you regarding the possibility of changing your Church Order to allow an extension of the variety of material allowable to be sung in your churches. I am not writing with the request that you publish this letter in the magazine, but I do feel that I must express my thoughts to you. If you think that the letter has anything in it of value to your people you are free to publish it, but I would request that if you do it be published in full.

My association with Dutch Churches of the Reformation has been fairly short, less than four years. By actual contact it has only been with the Christian Reformed Church and with the Canadian Reformed Church. By correspondence I have a very limited knowledge of your church and of the Old Christian Reformed Church. One of the things that has surprised me is that these churches considering themselves Psalm singing churches have versions of the Psalms which lack faithfulness in reproduction of the thought of Scripture both by way of deletion and addition. It has also surprised me to find how averse the Dutch people are to accepting English metrical versions which are much more faithful in content.

A Presbyterian minister recently wrote to me, "Arminianism has been sung into the church by hymns." Without

having been there to see I would like to draw you a picture of what I visualize as having happened to the Christian Reformed Church. The people began to sing popular hymns at home, at gatherings, and at church meetings other than the regular diet of worship. Doubts of the fixedness of God's eternal counsel are introduced; then 1924. In 1935 article 69 is altered, the flood gate is opened, man rather than God becomes the arbiter of what is pleasing to God and the hymns pour in.

It has been intimated by one of your correspondents that the Psalms are the Song Book of the Old Testament only, and that they are not directly applicable to some special occasions in the modern church. I would ask the following questions. Did the saints of the New Testament Church not find them sufficient? If there are occasions in the modern church which require song material not found in the Psalms should we examine those occasions to see if they should be in the church? I humbly suggest that the saints found the Psalms sufficient, and that they did not celebrate Christmas or Easter. If one examines the mixture of paganism with things supposedly Christian which passes under the name of Christianity in South America today it should not be hard to see how a corrupt church can take a pagan festival and give it a Christian significance. This temptation is strong in the rebellious mind of man. God warned the Old Testament Church of this when it was coming into the Promised Land. They mixed pagan practices with the worship of Jehovah with dire results.

I beg of you, brethren, bend your efforts to find versions of the Psalms for the worship of God that are faithful to the Scripture, and of which it can truly be said that they are the Psalms of David, and the inspired Word of God, and to eliminate from your Book of Praise any songs which can not be shown to have been sung by the saints of the New Testament Church.

Yours sincerely,

A. D. McClure

Lynden's bulletin answers the question, "What should we pray for in the morning of the Sabbath?" by quoting the following from the pen of Thomas Watson: That we may attend upon the Lord without distraction. I Cor. 7:35. It is said of Bernard, that when he came to the church door, he would say, "Stay here all my earthly thoughts." So should we say to ourselves, when we are at the door of God's house, "Stay here all my worldly cares and wandering thoughts; I am now going to hear what the Lord will say to me." Distraction hinders devotion. The mind is tossed with vain thoughts, and diverted. Distracted hearing is far from sanctifying the Sabbath.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

(Continued from page 89)

include their own *Canons*, either positive or negative, nor their own "Conclusion," both of which contain much sharp language, nor the views of either infralapsarian or supralapsarian, of whom there were many who subscribed to the *Canons*, in the excessive opinions and language referred to.

And thus we come to the end of our discussion of the *Canons*. Well may we in our day conclude our discussion with the petition which closes this "Conclusion": "May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, seated at the Father's right hand, gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, bring to the truth those who err, shut the mouths of the calumniators of sound doctrine, and endue the faithful ministers of his Word with the spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all their discourses may tend to the glory of God, and the edification of those who hear them. AMEN."

H.C.H.

THE REIGN OF CHRIST

O God, to Thy Anointed King
Give truth and righteousness;
Thy people He will justly judge
And give the poor redress.

Then every fruitful mountain side
Shall yield its rich increase,
And righteousness in all the land
Shall bear the fruit of peace.

The poor man's cause He will maintain,
The needy He will bless,
And He will break the strength of those
Who would the poor oppress.

So men shall fear Thee while the sun
In daily splendor glows,
And through all ages, while the moon
On earth its light bestows.

Like rain upon the new-mown grass,
That falls refreshingly,
Like gentle showers that cheer the earth,
So shall His coming be.

The righteous in His glorious day
Shall flourish and increase;
The earth, until the moon shall fade,
Shall have abundant peace.

Psalms 72

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

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

Nov. 5, 1960

Kalamazoo's minister, Rev. A. Mulder, declined the call extended him from the congregation at Randolph, Wisconsin.

Creston's consistory has presented a new trio to their congregation, consisting of Rev. R. C. Harbach, of Lynden; Rev. A. Mulder, of Kalamazoo; Rev. R. Veldman, of Southeast church in Grand Rapids.

Southeast's congregation is planning a special service to be held on Thursday evening, Nov. 10, to dedicate their new church building; and the Mr. and Mrs. Society of that church has issued invitations in all the area bulletins inviting "all to spend a very interesting evening with us on Sunday, Nov. 13, in our new church building. We have a very nice hymn sing planned with Mr. Edw. Ophoff as song leader. Proceeds for our new organ fund."

Reformation Day was remembered by many of our organizations in various ways. Adams St. School gave a program in Southeast Church, Oct. 29; Hope School children gave an all school program in First Church, Nov. 3, entitled, "Children of the Reformation"; and the fall Mr. and Mrs. League meeting featured a speech by Rev. C. Hanko, on "The Reformation In Holland."

The Western Ladies' League meeting was held Oct. 12 at Hull, Iowa. Rev. J. Kortering, of Hull, spoke on the topic, "Faith, The Anchor Of Hope." Rev. B. Woudenberg, of Edgerton, Minn., was assigned to answer questions.

The Eastern Ladies' League meeting was held in First Church with the Rev. M. Schipper, of Southwest Church, as the speaker for the evening.

The Adams St. School Athletic Association again sponsored a pancake supper Oct. 29, which brought out a goodly number of hungry patrons. Some of the food, and all of the work of about twenty-five men, were donated; some of the supplies were purchased at cost. All of this made it possible to realize a profit which swells the fund of the Association which supplies playground and athletic equipment.

The October Beacon Light's Singspiration was held in Southeast Church with Mr. Chas. Westra as director. The program was augmented with some vocal numbers by a ladies' trio.

Rev. and Mrs. J. Kortering, in a recent bulletin announcement, thanked their congregation in Hull for the gracious treatment afforded them at the time of the arrival of their new daughter, Sharon Fae, born Oct. 8.

The Prot. Ref. Teachers' Seminar was scheduled for Oct. 21 at Adams St. School. Miss Hulda Kuiper, an Adams St. teacher, gave a paper on "The Psychology of Learning," introducing the subject for discussion.

The newly organized Choral Society, a joint venture of members of Oak Lawn and South Holland, held its first regular meeting Oct. 26. It was decided to meet in Oak Lawn the first and third Wednesdays of each month, and the other weeks in South Holland.

The South Holland Ladies' Society was host to the Oak Lawn society Nov. 3. Rev. G. Vanden Berg, president of the Oak Lawn Society, gave a talk on "Faith, Hope and Love, As Applied To Our Societies."

Nov. 10 was the date set for a Question Hour sponsored by a Ladies' School Auxiliary, members of the South Holland and Oak Lawn Churches. The questions solicited were to concern the Prot. Ref. School movement under way in their congregations.

Many of our readers will no doubt find this contribution from the program committee of the Ref. Witness Hour of interest: "Did you know that the recorded tapes for broadcast over Trans-World Radio, Monte Carlo, Monaco, must be mailed to that station four to six weeks in advance of airing dates? At this writing the programs for the remaining weeks of 1960 have already been sent to the station's United States office in Chatham, New Jersey. From there they are airmailed to Monaco. Since Oct. 2 the Ref. Witness Hour has been broadcast over Trans-World Radio with England as its principal target area. A special announcement is made and recorded on each tape informing the listeners in the British Isles that written copies of the radio sermons may be obtained, free, by writing to the Reformed Witness Hour, 114 Wigmore St., London, W. 1, England. The letters received at this London address are then forwarded, unopened, to our Radio Committee." Our U.S. readers may obtain copies by writing to our local address: P.O. Box 8, Grand Rapids 1, Mich.

All of the participating churches carried special announcements concerning the 1960 Annual Deficit Drive for our Adams St. School. The Drive Comm. has set the amount of \$13,839.00 as the goal for this campaign to meet the needs of the school for efficient operation. Whereas two drives are usually conducted to bring up the necessary amount, it is hoped that one drive will suffice this year. All of the churches are having a special collection Sunday, Nov. 6, to receive the gifts and pledges of the school's supporters.

Redlands' Men's Society has recently decided to take up the study of the Book of James after having finished the first twenty-four chapters of Genesis.

. . . . see you in church.

J.M.F.