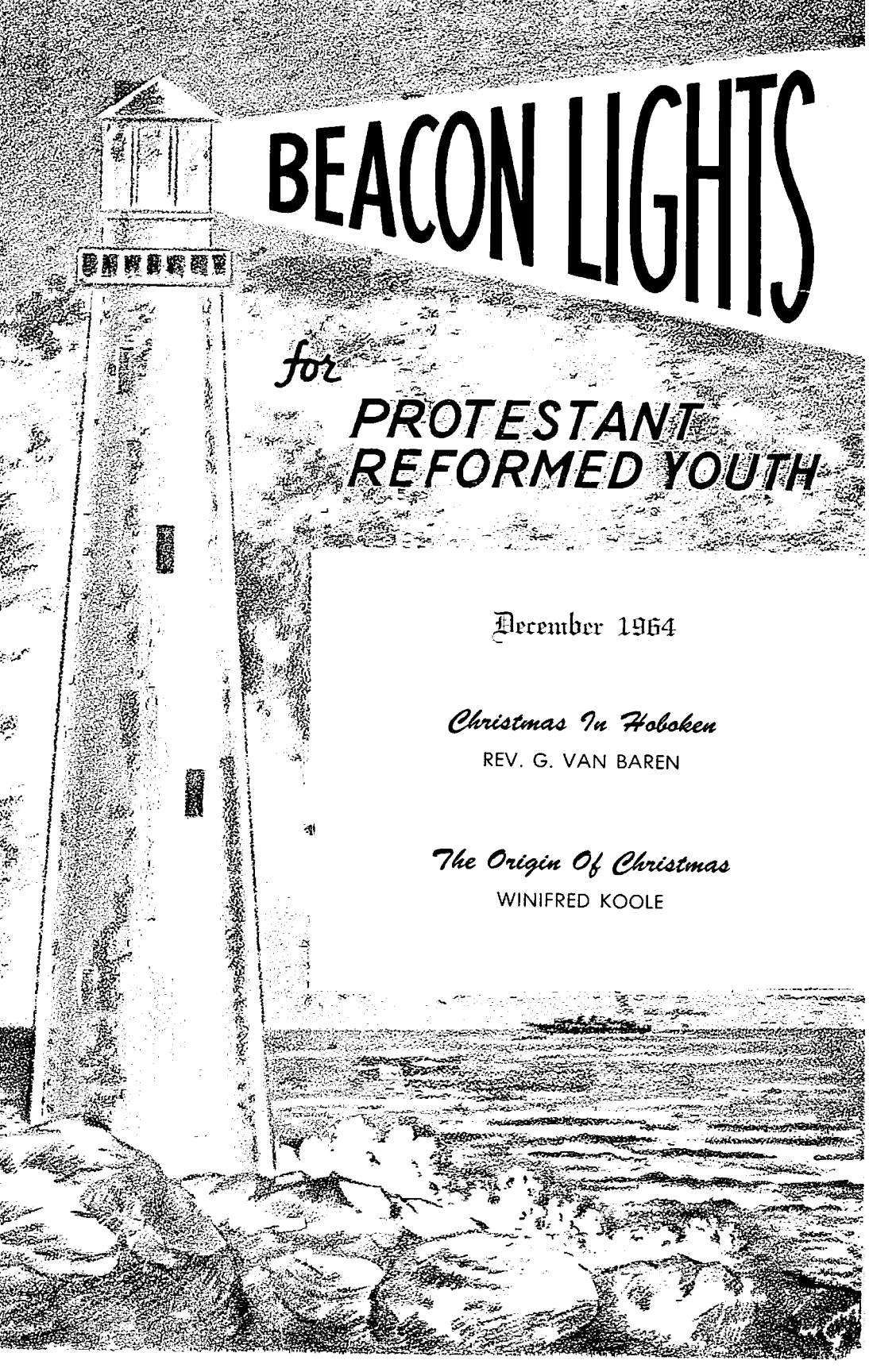

BEACON LIGHTS

for

PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

December 1964

Christmas In Hoboken

REV. G. VAN BAREN

The Origin Of Christmas

WINIFRED KOOLE

BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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Editorial

HE SHALL RETURN

The days are upon us when we again celebrate the wonder of wonders, the birth of our Lord. The story is simple and transparently clear — even the young children understand and know it. We too are so very familiar with the narrative, we have heard it so often. The angel, Gabriel, was sent from God to make the great announcement to the virgin Mary. He told Mary that she was favored of God and would bring forth the Son of the Highest who would reign over the house of Jacob forever. When Mary wondered how this would be the angel told her that the power of the Highest would overshadow her, the Holy Ghost would come upon her. Therefore the child whose name would be called Jesus, would be called the Son of God. Not quite a year later Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem to be registered for the taxing. They found no room in the inn and so had to spend the night in a cattle stall. During the night the child was born. Laid in the manger was he, and wrapped in rags.

The world rushed on unknowingly. Simple story of this birth of Jesus. Who knows, who cares? But this event is the very center of history! Some four thousand years before God had created the world with a view to it. And all during that four thousand year period God according to His eternal, immutable counsel guided the course of history so that all things pointed to this event. Then He came — God became flesh in order to save His people from their sins. Who knows, who cares? The vast majority of men do not. But the people of God do, for this is their salvation. This is the significance of the wonder of wonders. The Son of God became flesh in order to be the perfect mediator between God and His people. A wonder of Grace it is, not at all did His birth depend upon the will of man, He was born of a virgin. Thus God determined to glorify Himself and for that reason He created the world and man and all things. That too is the fundamental reason why we said it is the very center of all of history.

But is that the end? Is that all we can say about the incarnation? Of course not! All that that event stands for must yet be realized. Oh, to be sure, all is accomplished. Jesus, the Christ lived in perfect obedience to the Father. He met Satan's temptations and overcame, He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows Who bore all of our grief and carried all of our sorrows, oppressed was He, afflicted all for our transgressions. Through it all He opened not His mouth as Isaiah writes. His obedience was perfect and complete to the very end. Salvation is accomplished full and complete. He has ascended and been exalted at Father's right hand in highest glory. But all must yet be realized. This is the meaning of Christmas for the people of God.

The title of this editorial is "He Shall Return". And that too we must see in the incarnation. The birth of Christ, remember, is the center of history. That implies that something follows it. Just as all things pointed to His first advent so all things today point to his second. He shall return. Return to judge the living and the dead to make all things new, to realize all the perfect work of redemption which is already accomplished.

All things, all events occur with a view to that day of His return. That's why there is war in Viet Nam, rebellion in the Congo, murder and bloodshed in Mississippi. All these and many more occurances are pointing to exactly that fact of the second advent. This too is Christmas for the people of God.

As we celebrate the birth of our Lord let us be reminded of these things. Remember that just as all things were brought about by the hand of God with a view to His first coming so all things are now brought about by the hand of God with a view to His second coming. That too we must see in the incarnation.

Who knows, Who cares? The world does not. They will make their celebration an abomination to the Lord. They scoff at the virgin birth as a scientific impossibility. But we and the people of God everywhere know and care. This is our salvation, the Son of God in the likeness of sinful flesh. And as certainly as He came some two thousand years ago He shall return upon the clouds to bring to final realization His perfect work. We shall be saved, His cause vindicated, and God shall receive the glory. R.D.D.

The Origin of Christmas Customs

by WINIFRED KOOLE

The Church of our Lord Jesus Christ rejoices that her Head and Redeemer was born as a babe in Bethlehem almost two thousand years ago. On December 25? In the year 1 A.D.? It seems that neither the month nor the year are correct. The few historical facts recorded in the gospels gave scholars little to go on. In the sixth century a learned monk designated the year 754 after the founding of Rome as the year of Christ's birth and marked it as 1 A.D. on his new Christian calendar. Later investigations found that this placed the death of Herod the Great in the year 4 B.C., and the young child Jesus was residing in Egypt with his parents at that time. But the erroneous dating was too difficult to correct.

While most early Christians believed that it was on the 25th day of the month that Christ was born, the exact month was uncertain. The early Church did not appear to have much interest in the date of Christ's birth; the fact of His birth was the important thing, and still is. The attention of the early Church was particularly focused on Christ's coming again to judge the quick and the dead – a natural reaction to the severe persecutions the Church was undergoing. In fact in 245 A.D. Origen, probably in protest of existing pagan festivities, declared it to be sinful to even think of keeping Christ's birthday. It was not until controversies arose regarding the divine nature of the Saviour that greater interest in the circumstances of His birth emerged. A more dominant position was also given at this time to Mary the mother of Jesus. In 350 A.D. Julius I, Bishop of Rome, set December 25 as the specific date for observing the birthday of Christ. Many and varied were the celebrations already being observed at this time of the year. Perhaps the Romish church desired to turn the attention of its newly "converted" members from such pagan festivals as the celebration of the winter solstice or the lavish Roman Saturnalia to a holiday that had sacred significance.

The Church made many attempts to maintain this as a purely spiritual festival concentrated upon the mystery of the Incarnation. But it was not long before the pagan concomitants had become an integral part of Christmas festivities. Fires, lighted candles, the use of greenery for decoration, the burning of the Yule log, and the exchanging of gifts were some of these secular elements.

Among primitive people sun worship was common. The Persians also showed reverence for the sun and at the time of the winter solstice would kindle great fires in homage to Mithras, the deity of light. One of several church fathers who warned against the use of the symbols of sun worship was St. Augustine. Later the Romish church invested these symbols with religious significance hoping to direct their use to higher purposes. Certainly the church was correct in its interpretation of natural phenomena being symbolic of things spiritual, such as the material sun being a type of the Sun of Righteousness who was also that true Light that came to lighten the Gentiles. But when the heathen perceived, through the things that were made, the invisible things of Almighty God, "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . ." (Romans 1:25) Giving sacred significance to pagan symbols does not sanctify the symbols.

The use of greenery in the home was intended for more than decoration by pagan people. They revered natural phenomena, and the evergreens in particular were regarded as an emblem of immortality by northern tribes. By bringing greenery into their homes, these superstitious people hoped the magic power evidenced in the fact that the greens did not die during the freezing winters would prevent death from striking them also.

The most common of many legends concerning the origin of the fir tree as a symbol of Christmas centers on St. Boniface. This English missionary is reputed to have rescued a young prince from the hands of the Druids who were accustomed to offering human

sacrifices at the sacred oak to their god. Boniface cut down the oak and in its place a small fir sprang up. After telling the people the story of Christ's coming to earth, Boniface asked them to take the fir tree into their homes and to celebrate the birthday of the Christ. It is claimed that the German people were also the first to use lighted and decorated trees. A story, not authenticated, is told of Martin Luther's decorating a fir tree one Christmas Eve with candles to illustrate the beauty of the starry sky. But years before, the Romans in their riotous celebration of the Saturnalia — a festival which honored the ancient Roman god of agriculture — trimmed trees with trinkets and toys and sometimes candles. The Saturnalia was also an occasion for elaborate decoration of homes, temples, and statues of gods and goddesses with green boughs, garlands, and flowers. The practice of giving and exchanging presents was almost as common then as it is now at Christmas time.

Manger or crèche scenes have become both popular and competitive today. It originated with St. Francis of Assisi in 1223 A.D., who is also supposed to have been the first to popularize carols. Singing of Christmas carols was one of many things discouraged by the Calvinists who preferred instead the metrical psalms. Puritans in England and America did not allow Christmas caroling at all. In fact any special celebration of Christ's birth or of His death was forbidden by them. According to a Roman Catholic author, Francis X. Weiser, when Christmas celebration was restored with the return of the monarchy in England, it was a new kind of "Christmas without Christ. The old traditions of religious observances disappeared, leaving only a worldly shallow feast of amusement and reveling." And he could easily have added: "at which Santa Claus is the fêted guest."

To the Church of God this imaginery character represents one of the most repugnant aspects of a worldly observance of a "holy" day. There was a real St. Nicholas, an early Christian bishop who lived in an ancient town in Asia Minor, and who was noted for his generosity to the poor and to the children. Stories of him were carried by Dutch seamen to Holland, and as a result December 6 was designated as gift day for the children in his honor. No doubt the early Dutch settlers of New York took with them this tradition. But the Santa Claus of today bears no resemblance to this ancient bishop. The poem of Dr. C. C. Moore probably had much to do with this transformation. Certainly the Church does not fear the supplanting of Christ as the central Figure of Christmas by Santa Claus. And the world never did and never can celebrate Christ's Day anyway.

The Church of Christ rejoices in the birth of the Saviour every day of the year, but it is good to have one special day set aside in which the Church comes together to commemorate this wonderful fact. How easy it is to be swept along with the rushing world into a shallow observance — to allow oneself to become beguiled by a superficial joy which is intensified by all the outward trivia that seems to be part of the whole "Christmas season." And then suddenly everything palls, and we are glad that Christmas will soon be over. For a deep and lasting joy, for a proper celebration of Christmas, it is necessary to separate oneself from all that is not truly God-glorifying in this season. Take time to read and meditate, alone and within the family, on "The Mystery of Bethlehem."

open forum

ANSWER TO H. W. KUIPER

Dear brother:

I read your answer to my article which appeared in the August-September issue of Beacon Lights and wish to reply as follows.

First, I would make a few preliminary remarks. In the first place, I stated that I appreciated your condemnation of the Three Points of 1924. With these remarks I agree. Secondly, you wrote as you did because you "esteem our youth dearly for His sake." You

may be sure that the same motive prompted me. Thirdly, you are "purported in my writings (writings of H. V.) as being one who holds to the concept that the Christian Reformed Church is wholly false"? Brother, I merely wrote that I *feared* this. And I must honestly confess that these fears have not been removed. Fourthly, you "refuse to let brother Feenstra or brother Veldman or anyone else poison my pen." Writing to our "precious" youth, you inform them that I tried to poison your pen. Nothing is farther from the truth. I did not wish to poison your pen; I only wanted to purify it. You "have throughout the years held me dear in the cause of our peculiar truth"? Yet, as soon as I come against you, you tell our young people that I tried to poison your pen. Strange! Perhaps my fears are groundless. But did I try to poison your pen? Should and may the editor for our young people write things of this nature? Fifthly, I quote the following from your article: "But let that be a lesson to the youth from brother Veldman that one should always go to the earth's end to cite every existent and available source for support, or receive the consequence of open question of your orthodoxy." What must I say of this advice to our young people? First, it is pure nonsense! And, secondly, it is entirely unworthy of you. What prompted you, brother, to draw this caricature of a brother whom you always esteemed so highly? And this, mind you, because, whereas you cited ONLY ONE article of our Confessions, I called your attention to other parts of our Confessions. AND I GAVE YOU THE REASON WHY I CALLED YOUR ATTENTION TO THESE OTHER PARTS OF OUR CONFESSIONS. You see, brother, years ago I struggled with this question of the true and false church. And I have preached on it. And the fact is that L. D. 21 impressed me as being so important and fundamental to arrive at a correct understanding of this problem. Sixthly, I must refer to your citing of Zechariah 7:10b and 8:17a. For the sake of our young people, I will quote these verses: "And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart . . . And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour." Brother, do you think that I harbor evil in my heart against you? That would be a terrible thing!

I write at the beginning of this answer that my fears have not been removed. I realize that you wrote in your articles that you did not speak of everybody in the Christian Reformed Church, head for head. I also called attention to this in my article in the August-September Beacon Light. This, brother, does not necessarily mean much. In all my dealings with those who maintain the "one-true-church, all-other-churches-false" concept, they never say that there are no people of God in the Christian Reformed Church. But, you also wrote other things. And these other things are the things that bother me. In your February article you call the Chr. Ref. Church a group, not entitled to the name of Christ. And it is evident from your articles that you mean the Chr. Ref. Church. You declare that you are in agreement with our clergy and also in agreement with what your father wrote in the article to which I refer you in my preceding article. But, in that article your father calls attention to the fact that Christ addresses the churches of Rev. 2 and 3 as "Church;" he would never speak of the Chr. Ref. Church simply as a group.

In the April Beacon Lights (page 8), you write: "No, brother Feenstra, I do not believe that the Lord blesses the Christian Reformed Church as INSTITUTE anymore!" Also this statement is a ground for my fear. What do you mean? Do you mean that the Chr. Ref. Church, deteriorating rapidly, will ultimately become wholly corrupt and silence all truth within its midst if it refuse to repent? But, is this the same as declaring that the Lord does not bless the Chr. Ref. Church as INSTITUTE anymore? What is the institute of a church? The institute of a church includes the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of Christian discipline. It also includes all catechetical instruction and family visitation. To say that the Lord never blesses the institute of a church simply means that Christ's voice is never heard in that church. This voice is heard through the institute. Then His grace and Spirit are never experienced. There is in the Christian Reformed Church no conversion, no faith, no blessing of any nature. This is the reason why I asked you the question: "Can any church be wholly false where the Son of God operates by His Spirit and Word"? And you answered this question in the negative. You claim that the Chr. Ref. Church is not

wholly false? So, the Son of God does operate in that Church, and this means that He operates there through the institute. But, how, then, can it be true that he never blesses that institute? That is my problem. And this is exactly the thrust of T. Feenstra's article which you completely ignored.

These things, brother, are serious to me. I repeat: I have struggled with this question. To say that the Chr. Ref. Church, Confessionally and as Institute, is wholly false, is, in my opinion, untenable. Proper and sober discernment is, indeed, requisite.

H. Veldman

Reply to Rev. H. Veldman

AS TO CONFESSIONS

Dear Reverend Veldman:

Your "fears" are playing a rather prominent role in this attack which you proceed to carry against what I have written. I would now suggest once again that you abandon such tactics of stating simply your fears, and determine the matter in your mind so that you do not have to talk of fears, but rather will be able to show that a particular affirmation by this writer is heretical. I have invited you to do this before. I have also yielded to your insistence that an "introduced" topic be discussed and have made, in my last reply, some comment on that topic, viz, the possibility of maintaining both the concept that there are "sheep" in the sphere of the Christian Reformed Church and the concept that the confession of that institute denies Christ. Why you do not take hold of those affirmations and proceed to show the error resident therein escapes me. Once more, I invite you to do so, or else withdraw from the lists as one who has no interest in the matters at hand.

Now in your second contribution, I notice six points of preliminary remarks, upon which I will comment according to the order listed, and begin by expressing satisfaction with your first two points.

Concerning your third point: Do you deny that in your writings I am purported as being one who holds to the "one-church-true, all-other-churches-false" view, simply by now stating "I merely wrote that I *feared* this" (underscoring mine, HWK)? Brother, I used *purport* as verb transitive passive here, as you well know, and as defined: "to have the appearance, *often specious*, of being or *intending*", which in the passive means not "to have the appearance of intending" but rather "To be given the appearance of intending". You may notice my underscoring and so be advised that I deny with all at my command your inferences and am compelled to brand your fears as groundless, which, by the way, you yourself suggest in this article!

Concerning your fourth point: I suppose that I could resort to the technique which you employed above, and respond to your question here that I did not say that you tried to poison my pen, but rather that I refuse to let you or anyone else do so. But I will not do that. I will take your own words, show them for what they actually say, and quit the field without further opposition on this point! And though I have held you dear in the cause of our truth, do not say that it is "Strange!" that I expose your writing for what it is. The high esteem in which I hold anyone does not preclude my duty or right to point up his error. Discussion is one thing, Reverend; but your tactics are another.

Notice then your words: "I did not wish to poison your pen; I only wanted to purify it." What have we here? The accusation of corruption, or the attempt to purify that which is pure? You no longer just "fear", but you affirm corruption is present. Yet you do not specify. And this you do, blindly brushing aside every renouncement which I have made concerning the inferences made. I am trying to determine just what your objective is, brother.

Yes, Reverend Veldman, it is evident that you attempt, also in this last contribution, to put words, words to which I have denied any allegiance, into my pen. And I categorically deny you that privilege! The question is not whether I may write thus in reply to such things for our young people; not at all. The question is whether you have the ethical right to question the orthodoxy of your brother in print solely on the basis of your fears, and without definite instruction contrary to his alleged error! When such appears, I both may and should answer as I did.

Concerning your "fifthly": You continue, brother, in your writings, to identify what I have said or done with what it has been your experience that the advocates of the "One-church-true, all-other-churches-false" view say or do. What is your thrust here? Why don't you come out and make your case so

that the readers and I will know your purpose? Showing me some references as such signifies nothing; but your lesson (not my advice) came when you continue with your identifying statement which followed. You may say what you want of the lesson which you set before them, but your self-indicting "pure nonsense" suffices for me!

Concerning your sixth point: I will answer your question! The citing of these texts followed in a statement prefaced with the word "otherwise". Did you see that? *That* statement was preceded by one in which I invite you to recognize the topic under discussion, attack *what I had written* on that topic, and then instruct me as to how you judge my position to be heretical, with the promise that when that is established I would repent. That still stands today. But if you cannot or will not do that in the process of discrediting my writings in public print, the answer to the question which you raise is, unequivocally, affirmative. In the other instance, negative. And I agree with you that the former would be a terrible thing!

Now we come to the discussion proper again. You do not counter what I have written to establish that the confession of the institute of the Christian Reformed denies the Christ. Didn't I invite you to do that? Then the case is yours, you see, for I stand on that ground. Take that away, and I am vanquished in this discussion, the day is all yours, and I will be led and instructed in the truth. The foregoing all deals with the nature of the confession of that denomination.

But: we can really go no further now. For you evidently believe that the possibility exists for the Christian Reformed to utterly deny Christ in their "Three Points" and yet confess Him in truth elsewhere in their doctrines. I do not believe that this possibility exists whatever. The god of the "Three Points" of 1924 was maintained as their God at the expense of the unity of the church, wasn't it? Why do you not show how they can maintain *that* god of their heretical innovation without, per force, superimposing that concept of God over the whole of their confessions? This, mind you, only as it bears upon the evaluation of their confession, and not upon his saints being fed there. The latter is a separate consideration, as I purpose to show.

Your two new objections, after neglecting to refute my former answer, are: 1) That I call the CRC a group, and 2) That I stated my belief that God does not bless the Christian Reformed AS INSTITUTE anymore.

Concerning your objection to use of the term "group": What you say here is very inaccurate. The fact is that I spoke of group, not as identical with the Christian Reformed Church, but particularly the group that maintains the present day Christian High Schools (see my first answer to Mr. Thys Feenstra, wherein this very identification is made *as such!* April issue, p. 6-7). Who wants to call the Christian Reformed Church a group, or to what purpose? But I certainly hope that you do not object when I call a group a group! And the group whereof I wrote has, for the most part, taken an affiliatory confession of the Christian Reformed Church. And I told brother Feenstra that I was speaking of the confessions of the Christian Reformed CHURCH! So now who is simply calling them a group? I don't fathom your direction here, brother. Your own words in your first contribution make for me and against yourself, so that your asseveration goes for nought: notice — you spoke of my statement of the group, and then say "I believe I may say that he is *also* speaking of the Christian Reformed Church" (underscoring mine, HWK)

Concerning your objection to my statement concerning the institute: Your "to say that the Lord never blesses the institute of a church simply means that Christ's voice is never heard in that church." is hardly the way to dispute my statement that their confession is a Christ-denying one or, for that matter, that He does not bless the institute which embraces such a confession. Was the church of Laodicea devoid of any of the saints? Not according to the words of Christ, for He does not send His Word where His saints are not. Were they fed? We both affirm that God sees to the needs of His saints always, lest they die. So He did work in that institute while His saints were there, but the call to them was that they should come out! Did God *bless* the institute of the church at Laodicea? The contrary is obvious!

I believe that if the Christian Reformed Church today possessed sufficient strength of discipline to maintain her confessions as she ought that there could be no proclamation of the gospel in her midst. But the fact that she lacks that does not make for your point of view. Why is it that there can be ANY voice heard in opposition to Prof. Dekker's teaching

without censure in their midst today? I ask that because I am convinced that he teaches fundamental Christian Reformed doctrine, according to the confession of his institute. That question has already been decided by their Synod, 40 years ago. But it is therefore obvious that not all within the camp of the Christian Reformed Church are in agreement with that which they at the same time confess by wilfully remaining members in that institute. This is undoubtedly true for certain of the laity as well as some of its clergy. THUS, as I told you before, it is quite possible for some of the saints to be found there, and to be fed also. But I will still maintain that they are fed *within* that institute with that which is in direct conflict with the confession of that institute. From what you have written, you do not agree to this.

If God blesses the institute, is that blessing by God not evident in spiritual prosperity and growth in and development of the truth? Or, how *does* God bless an institute? You will not claim that His use of it is to be identified with His blessing of it, will you? If God blesses the institute that doctrinally goes wayward, why may we not remain in the sphere of the blessing of God? No, the call is, rather, to come out simply because God is not pleased to bless an institute which denies Him . . . the while feeding and keeping His saints that linger there, and admonishing them to come out.

I follow your definition of the institute, and the five-fold manifestation. But, where does the consideration of its confession enter? The ministry of the word and its official confession are not identical matters, are they?

So you have taken the readers far afield from the beginning point of the editorial. And I have expressed myself on this matter, too, although by your insistence only. That I ignored anyone's remarks is a rankly fallacious assertion. If one is unable to stay with the topic under discussion, he does not have the right to infer that this is also the case with others.

Reverend Veldman, this is my stand. If it is incorrect, refute my stand, as that of one who sincerely desires to be of one mind with you on this matter.

Fraternally in the Lord,
H. W. Kuiper

CRITIQUE

A. LUBBERS

PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND HIS GREAT SOCIETY

My article, which was printed in the October issue of Beacon Lights made its appearance hard upon the election of President Johnson. President Johnson, who will be inaugurated into office in January, overwhelmingly defeated his opponent, concerning whom we wrote last time.

At that time my article should have been entitled "A Look at the Conservative Candidate" because I said so much about the Goldwater position and had been quiet respecting the position of Lyndon Baines Johnson, who represents the liberal wing in American politics. He it is who was the favorite candidate of the Labor Union leaders and was extolled by Socialist and Communist nations as being

the favorite candidate of the 1964 election.

Irrespective of how you voted or whether you voted in the election it would seem to me that you would have carefully considered the possibilities and that you would have been somewhat influenced by the tremendous flood of literature which came steaming from the pens of the conservative thinkers in America. Many of us are avid readers of *Time* magazine, *Life* magazine, the daily newspaper and other of the liberally controlled news media. There are periodicals, however, such as *The National Review* which purport to be more conservative in their political approach and differ with the liberal policies of the established government. It is true that the editors of some of the periodicals which I have classified as being liberal make pithy comments and point out certain peripheral inconsistencies in a newsmakers position but they never differ fundamentally with the basic position of the American politician, who seems to be content with a general movement toward more and more state and federal control of every facet of the individual's life.

Lyndon Baines Johnson, who rose to prominence from the political backwoods and badlands of Texas has been severely criticized previous to his election by those from his own state and by others who did not want to see him elected to the presidency. I could suggest materials to read but many of these materials reflect upon the personal life of Johnson and it is not my intention to consider the person of President Johnson but rather the ideas of Johnson as they are the trend of times.

Much of the argument and jargon of President Johnson was presented in the framework of what he called the "Great Society." President Franklin D. Roosevelt had proffered his "New Deal," Truman his "Fair Deal", the late President Kennedy his "New Frontier" and now President Johnson spouts out concerning the "Great Society". He along with his predecessors seem to realize that the only hope from civilization in this vale of tears is that all men unite in a fight against the curse that has come upon all men since the fall of Adam. L. B. J.'s "Great Society" will be concerned with Urban Renewal, Health Care, Making America Beautiful, Rapid Transit, Water and Air Pollution, Depressed Areas, and Education. He epitomizes all his ideals by saying: "There are those that say this battle cannot be done; that we are condemned to a soulless wealth. I do not agree. We have the power to shape the civilization we want. But we need your will – your labor – your hearts – if we are to build that kind of society."

His primary concerns are with building a "Great Society" in the United States but I am sure that he would agree with Emery Reves who wrote *The Anatomy of Peace* that "There is not the slightest hope that we can possibly solve any of the vital problems of our generation until we rise above dogmatic nation-centric conceptions and realize that, in order to understand the political, economic and social problems of this highly integrated and industrialized world, we have to shift our standpoint and see all the nations and national matters in motion, in their interrelated functions, rotating according to the same laws without any fixed points created by our own imagination for our own convenience."

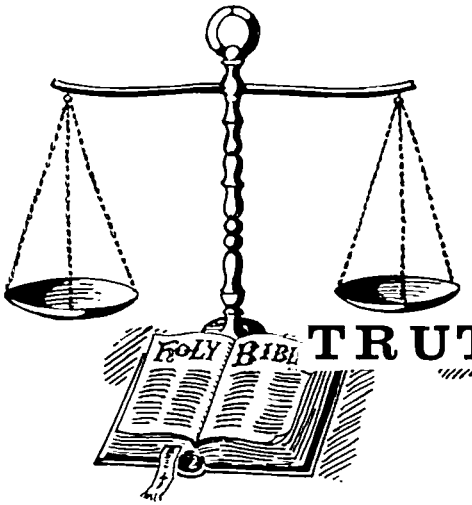
More than 26,000,000 Americans did not assent to the election of President Johnson in spite of the great plurality by which he was elected. These 26,000,000 Americans differed politically and possibly economically with the current administration and with that which is to be. For a little while there is still a stop-gap which will seemingly prevent the administration from doing anything rashly. And yet there is a certain momentum in the direction of extreme statism and governmental dictation which cannot be stopped. All things must be seen to be moving in the direction of the establishment of the anti-Christian world power. The nations from the four corners of the earth are beginning to assert themselves and to have prominent places in the high places of the world. Colonialism is almost a thing of the past and nationalism in the previously backward countries of the world is the order of the day. The thinkers of the world know that all must be united and this is Satan's great goal that all nations shall finally unite and battle the church so that only those who have the mark of the beast will be safe.

In the midst of all this tumult when their is much confusion and conservative conservatives prate about a Christian American which is being destroyed we have a calling to be clear minded and a church in the midst of the world and not look to a development of "Utopia" in this world.

It is not my purpose therefore to defend

either the right or left, to defend either liberal or conservative but to urge you to investigate the political situation today and realize that all things in the world are far worse than we are often willing to admit. There is much more to the business of political intrigue than meets the eye as presented by the controlled press.

I urge you to read therefore, but always with the clear consciousness of your pilgrimage. Lift up your heads, therefore, for your redemption is nigh.



TRUTH vs. ERROR

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

CALVINISTS AND CALVINISM

Calvinism is that Reformed principle which fundamentally stands on the truth of the Godhood of God. Calvinism as no other system of doctrine exalts the absolute sovereignty of God. The center and unifying principle of this system is the glory of the Lord God Almighty. In younger days the catechetical question was put to me, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." We have been taught to pray "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," and the question is put to us year after year as to the meaning of that first petition, which is explained thus: "Grant us, first, rightly to know Thee, and to sanctify, glorify and praise thee, in all Thy works, in which Thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth are clearly displayed; and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that Thy name may never be blasphemed, but rather honored and praised on our account" (HC, 122). In every place, through all time, from first to last, from eternity to everlasting, as Calvinists we are taught to see God.

The main project of Calvinism is to glorify God. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Paul illustrated this principle when in his conversion he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and when a mature believer, answered his own question, knowing then that he had been foreordained "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:6).

Only the Calvinist with his high view of God will have a profound view of sin. To him sin is a lethal, loathsome leprosy of such offensiveness that neither he nor any man discovers its enormity because it is beyond human calculations. Yet he more than any others knows the exceeding hatefulness of sin. He knows sin to be defiance of the authority of God, to be banishment from the paradise of God. "All sinned, and are falling short of the glory of God." Every sinner is by nature "dead through trespasses and sins." The sinner is guilty of implacable hatred against God and his neighbor. He is so totally depraved by sin that he is "wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil."

The Arminian does not see sin as a thing so bad. Man is only "very far gone from original righteousness." The Calvinist takes seriously the verdict of the Word of God, and believes man is "wholly gone from original righteousness."

Calvinism relative to salvation rejects all Pelagianism, or do-it-yourself philosophy; all semi-Pelagianism, or do-it-yourself with-a-little-help-from-God; all synergism, or man working it out with God. No; salvation is all and only of grace. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of salvation. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Nor is there so much as a square inch of ground for boasting. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded! By what manner of law? of works?" No, for if works anywhere along the line entered in, there would be boasting, both here on earth and hereafter in heaven. But "by the law of faith;" for as soon as you see that salvation is through faith, then you confess that it is nothing of man and all of God.

Calvinism is elated with the truth that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose, that their names are written in the Book of Life because chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, before He decreed the being of angels, before all eternity, He foreordained the Son of God as the firstborn of every creature. Then God foreordained Him to be the Firstborn among many brethren, then He in Him foreordained the many sons unto glory. This is how God viewed man in His decree. From God's point of view, before He found a place for the creation, before He found a place for the Fall in His counsel, He had a place for the Israel of God in His everlasting love. Man was not first viewed as fallen, all equally guilty in sin, with some left in that lost condition while others were translated out of it. Man is viewed as belonging to the same unfallen lump: some are made vessels unto honor and some unto dishonor. God is absolutely sovereign in His purpose, according to which He chooses men "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil . . . not of works," but according to this principle, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy," and this, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will and whom He will He hardeneth."

Although Calvinism views man in himself as nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and as compared to God the small dust of the balance, yet renewed, in Christ, man is exalted and glorified to the highest place under God in the universe. The renewed man has been lifted up out of the horrible pit, his feet set on the Rock of Salvation, a new song put into his mouth and his goings established so that his path grows brighter and brighter to the perfect and last day. He knows himself a man of destiny, predestined in Christ Jesus his covenant head and representative to be King over the earth and the heavens (Heb. 2:8; Eph. 1:10).

What are Calvinists like? The "free-thinkers" and the liberals have caricaturized them as fanatics, cranks, kill-joys, extremists, the lunatic fringe, and narrow-minded obscurantist fossils. Men are so castigated whenever they claim to know anything or to have the truth. John Bunyan was called much worse for his "Pilgrim's Progress," and his "Life and Death of Mr. Badman" (his treatise on reprobation in dialogue form). Martin Luther, who deserves to be listed among Calvinists because he tenaciously held the doctrines of saving grace, absolute sovereignty and predestination, stood the rage of the world. Oliver Cromwell was mocked for his army dubbed "Cromwell's Saints." But he stood upon the solid rock of Calvinistic faith. His soldiers took the same stand. His army put every enemy in Britain and in Europe to rout. Against forces three times greater than theirs they fought so successfully as to destroy and conquer every foe that opposed them. With a firm faith in the absolute sovereignty of God, they believed they were ordained to victory. Hence, they marched against their enemies with disdainful confidence singing, "Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered." They faced battle as their day of triumph, and entered it shouting in the name of Jehovah. Afterward, back in their tents, they were known for their prayer and worship, not for swearing, drunkenness and gambling.

In the Netherlands the history of Calvinism was written in blood, when the true church was persecuted by Spain with every cruelty religious fanaticism could invent.

Following that horror came flame, flood, famine, pestilence and siege. History records that in that little country there were more martyrs than in all other Christian communities, and none less steadfast. Take the siege of Leyden. With no food, famine struck, then the black plague. Multitudes died of starvation and pestilence. When called upon to surrender, they answered the enemy "as long as you hear the mew of a cat, the bark of a dog, you know we hold out! When all are dead but ourselves, we will devour our left arms, and with our right arms defend our women, our liberty and our religion against the foreign tyrant." When deliverance came, they could do no more than stagger or crawl, which they did, not toward home nor relief stations, but to the house of God. There they worshiped, not as ordinarily in loud psalms of praise, but, with strength almost gone, and almost voiceless, their song came forth in grateful sobbing and weeping.

The survivors of that great siege, by their leader, William of Orange, himself a convert to Calvinism, were given a choice of either a reduction in taxes or a school of learning as a token of esteem for their valor. They chose the school, and the University of Leyden came into being. Calvinists have always pinched themselves to the bone to give their children Christian education.

So it was in "the dear dead days beyond recall." But are not Calvinists now out of date, behind the times, their faith outworn, their creed obsolete and defunct? Are they not so narrow gauge that they no longer fit with the stream-lined track to progress? But what is boasted of as modern progress has never produced anything like the labor of the ages produced by the English Puritans, the Scotch Presbyterians, the Dutch Reformed, the French Huguenots or the American Calvinists. What is called progress by the religious liberal is to the Calvinist departure farther and farther away from the truth. What they mean by progressive liberalism is really defection from the truth. It is neither progress nor development. It is a revival of heresy. It is revolution in the line of unitarianism and atheism.

The truth is never passé. The truth we nickname Calvinism is the modern comprehensive development of Augustinianism. The latter is an expansion and enlargement of Paulinism. Paulinism is the divinely revealed interpretation of the Gospels. The Gospels are the fulfilment of all the righteousness contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the Scriptures we find the Word of God, the entire Word of God, and nothing but the Word of God. That Word and the system of truth derived from it, written in the heart by the powerful testimony of the Holy Spirit, make one a Calvinist, that is, one in the closest agreement with the Word of God.

There are some who wear Calvin's cloak as a sort of laboratory smock. In the laboratory, in the study or in the seminary they are "Calvinists," but in the pulpit they are Arminians. Others are at best "Five Point" Calvinists. Certainly we ought to believe and preach the Five Points of Calvinism, the warm and savory truth of the Canons of Dort with their Rejections of Errors. But there is reason to believe that many so called five point Calvinists have not nearly as much to offer as the Canons of Dort. But why not be a Heidelberg Catechism Calvinist? Why not be a Belgic Confession Calvinist? Or why not a Westminster Confession Calvinist? Why not a "Declaration of Principles" Calvinist? In other words, why should not a Christian be severely scriptural? Calvinism is scriptural. It is in harmony with the experience of the mature man in Christ. As a man advances in years the more Calvinistic he grows. Perhaps some would say that it is enough to be saved, to know you are saved, to have Christ, to know you are one with Christ, that the church, the means of grace and the Calvinist described above are much too burdensome for a free-born conscience standing fast in the liberty of Christ. The Calvinist answers that we can know only so much about God and the doctrines of grace as the Lord has seen fit to reveal in Holy Writ; and it is important that we know that much! To withhold from men, or to deny them any portion of the Scripture truth is to defraud them of the favor of God, is to reprove and censure the Holy Spirit the Author of Scripture for placing therein what would be better omitted. In Calvinism there is nothing but what is necessary and useful to know. Calvinism is the only respectable theology. It alone provides the right interpretation of all temporal and eternal reality. It alone does justice to the teaching of the Bible.

FROM Dort TO TODAY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REFORMED FAITH

the secession of 1834

(14)

REV. HERMAN HANKO

We are discussing history that touches directly upon our own Protestant Reformed Churches. For many within our own denomination have their spiritual roots in the secession of 1834. Many of our older people in our churches had parents or grandparents who took an active part in the secession, and can themselves tell of the stirring times when the Church of Christ gained once again its precious heritage of the truth.

We must understand however, that the secession was a rather disorganized movement, especially in its beginnings. There was no organized process of secession. There were, as early as 1826 in fact, many groups that left the State Church and never joined the churches that carried on the Reformed faith. They were sort of "sucker branches" on the tree of the church. Yet we do well, at least briefly, to notice some of them.

For one thing, when the people became weary of the doctrinal heresies and moral decay of their congregations, they sometimes simply ceased going to Church altogether. They grouped together into little bands which met in houses. Without any ministers of the gospel, they were instructed by "exhorters" —i.e., men who were not ordained clergy, but who, being rather gifted laymen, would "exhort" the people from the Word of God. Anyone who has any acquaintance with the cultural history of the Netherlands will be aware of such men as Bilderdijk and Da Costa who were leaders in this movement. Some of these groups never did join the churches of the secession.

There were secondly, some sectarian movements of secession which never belonged to the Reformed faith and were, in their own ways, just as heretical as the church from which they seceded. For example, there was a group called "New Lights of Zwijnrecht" and another group called the "Christian Brethren Congregation" who were thoroughly subjective and mystical. In a limited sense they were even communistic in that they practised community of earthly goods. But more importantly, they taught such heretical doctrines as universal salvation; the anabaptistic view of an earthly kingdom of Christ — in which they held all civil law in contempt and set up their own nation within a nation; the doctrine of additional revelation besides the Scriptures — to which we have referred in previous articles. Some of these groups later left the Netherlands to come to America where part of their membership joined the Mormons.

There was also a chiliastic sect led by a certain Jan Mazereeuw which thought that Christ was coming at any moment. Consequently, and foolishly, they took their children out of school, sold their lands and possessions, and waited with folded hands for Christ to return. They were in bad trouble when they discovered to their dismay that they had committed a theological error.

There were also several independent groups which were fighting the same evils in the Church as the seceders, but who never joined the Reformed Churches. Notable among these was a group led by Rev. Ledeboer who fought strenuously against the introduction of hymns in the Church.

But to get on with the real separation which led to the re-establishment of a Reformed Church.

It all began with Rev. De Cock who was minister in the Reformed Church of Ulrum. In October of 1834 this minister was sus-

pended from office and deposed as minister of the Word of God by the National Church. The grounds for suspension and deposition were pretty flimsy.

1) He had baptized children of parents from other Churches because these parents refused to answer "Yes" to the question of the Baptism Form which asked them concerning their belief in the doctrine "taught here in this Christian Church".[1]

2) He had written an introduction to a pamphlet which had attacked the singing of Arminian hymns in various congregations.

3) He had openly and in writing attacked two ministers who held heretical views. One of these ministers he attacked denied the truth of the trinity; the other denied the sinless nature of Christ. The National Church was of the considered opinion that this last ground was the most important.

With the deposition of Rev. De Cock, the secession began. The break had been forced by the State Church itself. The secession was a reality.

Events quickly followed. In spite of his deposition, De Cock continued to preach to his people who needed him. He called upon others to join him. He wrote the chief documents of secession which emphasized the need for return to the creeds, the liturgical forms and the Church Order of Dordt.

Soon after his deposition, Rev. Scholte was also deposed on the grounds that he had preached for De Cock after De Cock's deposition. Rev. Brummelkamp was deposed for refusing to baptize children of non-confession parents and for refusing to sing hymns in his congregation. Other discipline followed. Rev. Van Raalte was disciplined for refusing to promise unconditional obedience to all the decisions and laws of the General Synod. This happened at the time of his examination for the ministry. Rev. Van Velzen was deposed from office on the same grounds that were used to discipline Van Raalte.

Other ministers joined with those who seceded, in sympathy with their cause. And they took many people with them.

Before we pursue this history a little bit more, we ought to notice that the basic question was always the question of the authority of the creeds.[2] The stand of the Church (also expressed in the Formula of Subscription) had always been that the Three Forms of Unity were agreed to as being *in full harmony* with the truth of Scripture. The National Church, in order to through a benevolent wing over the heretics in the Church, had deliberately changed this wording so that agreement had to be expressed only *in so far as* these creeds were in harmony with Scripture. This may seem minor, but it was a very subtle and deceitful change which really left the interpretation and acceptance of the creeds to every individual. Any man could believe and teach anything he wanted to and justify his opposition to the confessions on the ground that he did not agree with the confessions. This was the end of the matter. The seceders were insistent on returning to the historical stand of the Church.

We ought to pause here for just a moment. It is worth noticing that history has a way of repeating itself. Once again, in our own day, the question is really one of the creeds. Every kind of heresy appears again in the modern church. Naturally, these heresies run counter to the creeds. In the churches which maintain the same creeds as we do there are all kinds of these heresies being taught. Also in the churches which stand on the basis of such Calvinistic confessions as the Westminster Confession of Faith, no heresy that has ever appeared in the Church is strange any longer. Once again cries are raised in support of universal atonement. Once again the infallibility of Scripture is called into question. Once again such truths as the trinity and the divinity of Christ are being flaunted. And in confessionally based churches.

What then about the creeds? They are obstacles (as they are intended to be) against the propagation of error. So they must be disposed of. And this is exactly what one hears all around us. From the pages of ecclesiastical magazines comes the loud cry (even in Reformed Churches) that we must revise and update our creeds. They are dusty documents of a bygone era which "no longer speak to the church of today". They are ancient and decrepit archives that while of interest for their historical value, ought not to have *binding* authority in the Church. They are museum pieces which are probably worth some occasional studying; but they must not be permitted to stand in the way of making "the gospel relevant to our twentieth century."

This hue and cry marks the spiritual down-

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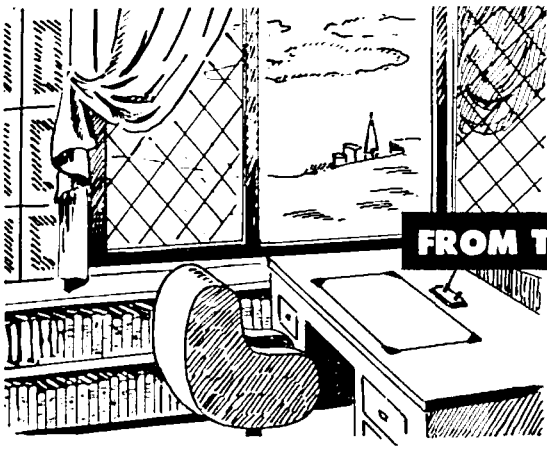
[1]Cf. preceding article for discussion of this point.
[2]By "creeds" I now mean the principle "Three Forms of Unity," but also the lesser creeds – our liturgical forms and Church Order.

fall of the Church. For by brushing aside the creeds, the church loosens itself from its moorings and becomes a rudderless ship cast about by every wind of doctrine.

Some Churches are already discarding their creeds. A notable example is the United Presbyterian Church in this country which is on the verge of adopting an entirely new document which will supercede the historic Westminster Confession upon which this Church has always stood.[3]

But this is little worse than the complete indifference to the creeds which characterizes practically every denomination. For while, in many instances, creeds still remain the official basis of the Church, they have been unnoticed and unmourned pushed into oblivion.

The danger is real. There is a lesson from all this which needs learning – badly. We must be at great pains to know our confessions, to become thoroughly acquainted with them; to love them; to cherish them as a precious heritage of the Spirit of Christ entrusted to our care. And we must fight to maintain them, not merely as dead documents, but as the living expression of the faith of the Church of Jesus Christ.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. VAN BAREN

Matthew 1:21 *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."*

CHRISTMAS IN HOBOKEN

In Hoboken? Yes; in Hoboken – or any other town for that matter. Approaching Hoboken at night, one can soon see that Christmas is here. The twinkling, blinking, colorful lights spell out a happy welcome to the joyous buyer entering the town. Ah, but what beautiful decorations are draped from every lamp post! The tinsel glistens and glimmers through the evergreen boughs which decorate the street. And there's something in the air, something that seems to force out of one all that is bitter and mean, and fills him with a sense of welbeing, of brotherhood and oneness with all men – call it that "Christmas spirit" if you will.

Walking down the street, one is struck by the clever, eye-catching displays which fill every window. There, in one of the larger windows, stands a life-size, animated Santa. His belly quivers and shakes as a bowl of Jello. His merry laugh rings out again and again – to the immense satisfaction of the circle of small children gazing at him. Beside him stand his trusty raindeer – with dear Rudolph, of red-nosed fame, in the lead. Nearby a hidden speaker blares forth with another carol, this time: "Silent Night, Holy Night." One is forced to move along in order to be able to converse in a somewhat normal tone of voice with his companion.

Within the store ("Pardon me, madam"), one sees row upon crowded row of the most

wonderful merchandise ("excuse me, sir")— merchandise which the kings of the earth centuries ago could not purchase with the half of their kingdoms. And the toys! Did you ever see such toys? There are big toys, little toys, mechanical toys, construction toys. Over there is one I like — that road racer set. That is quite some toy, with its lane-changing track, its jump track. I suppose that would be classified as one of the toys that fathers eagerly buy for their boys (?). And take a glance at those dolls! They weep, they wet, they walk. Fact is, they apparently can do anything a baby can do — only better. Or possibly you are looking for something for dad? There are the ties (they're always popular this time of year), the shirts, little "gimmicks" for the home, or tools for that basement workshop. Gifts for moms, for dads, for nieces, for grandchildren — they are all here in abundance.

But the time for shopping soon, too soon, comes to an end. Now one must go back to the car and ease once more into that "crazy" holiday traffic. Before long, one comes to the edge of town. The traffic thins, and our speed proportionately increases. But now the kids let out a shout: "Slow down, dad; there's a real pretty blue one!" And a bit farther the story is repeated. One lighted tree after another is spied — each one apparently prettier than the last (judging from those exclamations from the back seat). But even at that, home is best. There in the corner stands the nicest tree in the block. What fun the children had decorating it! Who would want to miss those shouts of laughter as the smaller one toppled over with the entire box of tinsel sprinkled over his head. Or who would not be speechless, watching those children gaze in silence and wonderment as dad places the lighted angel on the highest point of the tree. Now the tree is lighted; the tinsel is carefully hung; the gleaming balls flicker as a slight breeze moves them back and forth. The presents already are stacked high under its sheltering branches. That big box over there is Bobby's. Could it possibly be that electric train he's been admiring the past year long? And the long, narrow box with red ribbon is Sharon's. I can't imagine what that would be! On the wall the clock slowly counts the minutes til that glorious moment on Christmas morn when everyone rushes down to open those mysterious boxes.

Around the frame of the kitchen door are tacked the Christmas cards (47 according to my last count). There are cards with snowflakes, cards with santas, cards with mangers, cards with wise men three (though how the artist knew there were three, I'll never know), and cards with paintings by Grandma Moses. Tomorrow the mailman will come staggering up the front walk once again with another load of cards (and where will we ever find room to tack those?).

In the kitchen mother turns off the radio. After all, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" five times in one day is more than enough. Besides, with all that noise, how can one properly prepare that Christmas menu? Let's see: with sixteen people coming, a twenty-pound turkey will be needed. Then there's the salad . . . But now we're becoming involved in something far too complex for mere men; these are problems only mothers can solve.

Not far from the kitchen door, in the neighborhood park, stands a lighted, life-sized creche (you know — one of those manger-scenes which appear so lovely with the newly fallen snow resting lightly on it). The churches of the community were responsible for having it placed there. There was that drive a few years ago to "put Christ back into Christmas." This is the fruit. The merchants willingly contributed. The neighborhood artisans donated their time and talent. There stands the beautiful result. Mary holds the Babe tenderly in her arms. The two are sheltered by a few roughly hewn logs representing a barn (we don't know what the manger looked like — but you must admit that this *appears* authentic). While the shepherds stand nearby watching their sheep, and angels, suspended upon wires, float in the sky above, the wise men (three again) are bowing down before Him and presenting their gifts. (Of course, the wise men appeared possibly a year or more after the birth of Christ — but who would want to omit the wise men from the manger scene?) Soft lights flood the tender scene, while in the background, loud-speakers softly sound forth songs of the Baby's birth.

Nor is this the only effort of the community churches. They have already set their own "houses" in order. A small tree decorates the entrance of the church. Nearby is a pile of small presents laid there by the little hands of Sunday-School children (to teach them the idea of giving, you know).

Off to the side, in the study, the pastor already struggles with his Christmas sermon. This one has to be something special. It is not every day that so many people will crowd into the sanctuary. Here is the opportunity to speak to many who possibly will not hear the "Word" again for another year (unless they come for Easter too). The burden upon his soul is plainly reflected in the lines of concentration and deep thought upon his face. How can he emphasize anew that oft-repeated thought concerning the brotherhood of men? How can it be brought across that we must live with everyone (in the spirit of Christmas), share with everyone, not be so bigoted or one-sided. Then there's Mr. Brown to remember too. Likely he'll be there Christmas day. He still speaks of "niggers" and the report is that he would never sell his house to any negro family. How can the meaning of Christmas be pointed out to him? And if only he as pastor can burden their hearts with the thought of world peace, rule by international law, the need for real co-operation.

And the sermon this year will be climaxed (as in other years) with the children's Christmas play — that little sad story of the poor boy who starves on Christmas eve because the wealthy people of the neighborhood were too busy tending their turkeys to observe the dire need of the little fellow. And after the play everyone will go home to talk contentedly about that wonderful "spirit of Christmas."

"But," you ask, "what has all this to do with the text on the top of the opposite page — what has it to do with the name given Him (Jesus), but especially, what does it have to do with that thought expressed in the last part of the text: '. . . He shall save His people from their sins'?" That, my dear young friends, is a very, very good question. I just wanted you to give that some serious thought during this Christmas season.

HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE Book of GENESIS

by REV. H. VELDMAN

Genesis 31

A. *Jacob's departure from Laban.* — verses 1-18.

1. Jacob's complaint. — verses 1-8.
   a. Why had Laban's countenance changed? — verse 2. What do we read of Laban's sons? Why did they complain? Were they carnal as their father, afraid, perhaps, that their inheritance was suffering?
   b. Who commanded Jacob to return to the land of his fathers? Would Jacob's departure be difficult and did the Lord command him in order to comfort him and strengthen him? What did the Lord promise Jacob?
   c. What was Jacob's complaint against Laban? How did Laban try to deceive Jacob?
   d. How does Jacob explain his prosperity?
      1/ To whom does He ascribe his tremendous wealth? Verse 9.
      2/ What is the thrust of verses 10-12? What does the angel of the Lord show Jacob? Remembering that the rams of verse 12 are Laban's rams, were these rams not of a solid colour? Why does the angel call them what he did in verse 12? Does he describe them, not from the viewpoint of what they were, but from the viewpoint of what God intended them to bring forth?
      3/ Does not the angel, therefore, as-

cribe Jacob's wealth, not to Jacob's sagacity and cunning, but solely to the Lord?

c. What is the meaning of the expression, "I am the God of Bethel", in verse 18? Does this expression mean that God would remember His promise at Bethel? — see ch. 28: 13-15.

2. The answer of Leah and Rachel to Jacob's complaint. — verses 14-16.
   a. Was there any love lost between them and their father? Why not?
   b. What is meant in verses 15-16? Do they not say, first, that their father took their possessions, using them for his own carnal interest, and, then, secondly, that it has become their's? However, how did it become their's? Did Laban give it to them? Who?
   c. So, they are more than ready to leave with Jacob.

B. *Laban's pursuit of Jacob.* — verses 19-44.

1. Jacob steals away, unawares to Laban.
   a. Did Laban intend harm to Jacob? — see verses 23, 29, 42. Did Laban intend Jacob to be empty handed?
   b. Why did it take Laban only 7 days to overtake Jacob? Where did he overtake him?

2. Laban's hypocrisy.
   a. Is it true what we read in verse 26, that Jacob carried them away, *as captives and with a sword?*
   b. Is it true what we read in verses 27-28? Would Laban have sent them away with mirth, etc? Did he intend to impoverish Jacob? Would the departure have been a fond farewell?
   c. Who prevented Laban from doing harm to Jacob? — see verse 29. Notice that Laban speaks of the "God of your father." Indeed, was the Lord Laban's God?
   d. And what disturbs Laban according to verse 30? Of what sin is he guilty?

3. Verses 31-36.
   a. Why did Jacob leave Laban secretly? — verse 31. Did Jacob have a reason for fearing this? Should he have been afraid? — see verse 3. Why did not Jacob tell Laban what we read in verse 3? Would this impress Laban?
   b. What did Jacob not know according to verse 32? What does this reveal to us of Rachel?
   c. What did not Laban find his gods?

4. Jacob's exposure of Laban. — verses 36-42.
   a. What challenge does he hurl at Laban in verses 36-37?
   b. Notice what we read in verses 38-41. Does verse 38 imply a Divine condemnation of Laban? Is it not God Who prevents animals from casting their young? Notice what we read in verses 39-40. What does Jacob mean when he speaks of Laban's changing his wages 10 times? Is 10 a symbolical number? What does it symbolize? Does it mean that Laban put forth *every* effort to impoverish Jacob?
   c. Why does Jacob speak of the God of Abraham and of Isaac in verse 42? What is the meaning of this Name? Does it mean that that God took care of Jacob, had given him His promise and was faithful to that promise?
   d. Is Jacob's indignation of verse 42 justified? Is it wholly justified? Was Jacob wholly blameless at the house of his uncle? But, was it justified in principle? Did not God increase Laban's wealth tremendously the first 14 years, for Jacob's sake? And Jacob was faithful to Laban?

5. Laban's answer in verses 43-44.
   a. This answer indicates that Laban has little to say. Jacob's reproach had cut him to the quick.
   b. Is it true what he says in verse 43? All these things may have been his? Were they his now?
   c. And in a tone of self-sympathy he asks the question in verse 43.
   d. What does Laban propose in verse 44?

The News Editor's copy was received too late for publication.
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Staff of **Beacon Lights** together with the Federation Board takes this opportunity to extend thankful appreciation to Miss Nancy Heemstra who recently resigned as Finance Manager after many years of faithful service to our magazine.

R. D. D.