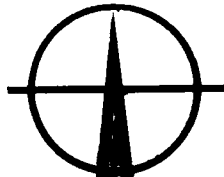


BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*



DECEMBER, 1975

CHRISTMAS



BEACON LIGHTS

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Editorial

THE REALITY OF CHRISTMAS

by Harry Langerak

Christmas is one of the most celebrated times of the year in the Christian world today. Church and world alike participate in its majestic celebration. Beginning a month before the date of celebration, the songs of Christmas begin to fill the air. The postman staggers under the ponderous burden of gift packages and greeting cards. Red and white bearded monstrosities are roaming the streets bellowing with inane laughter. Parties are held full of wine, food and song. As the day of celebration approaches, the crescendo of activity is incredible and one realizes that everyone is incomparably and indescribably happy about something.

Does one dare ask the questions, "What meaneth all this intense enthusiasm? Who or what can be responsible for this universal fervor?" The answer one would get is that "Jesus is born." But you may ask, "Is all this fuss over the birth of Jesus?" "Why of course," comes back the impassioned answer. Ah, yes, you see everybody is celebrating because Jesus is born. Yet, in the din of celebration, you will observe two diametrically opposed outlooks regarding this celebration. Jesus was born, but what a difference in outlook. The world which hates God will emphasize the humanity of the Babe of Bethlehem. They see a Babe of beauty born in the romantic setting of a cattle stall. What a peaceful scene, what a lovely child, what a heavenly night! Did not the Babe grow to be the best man that ever lived? Certainly if we follow his example, we would be able to achieve the elusive peace on earth and good will towards men. What a terrible irony! They have the

answer to the question. Yes, Jesus is born. They see many of the apparent features of Bethlehem. Many are the same things the child of God sees; yet the spectacles they have on are of this world. They see only what man in his sinful fallen state can see. They see what they want to see. Christ says of them in John 9:39, "For judgement I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." How ironic that the world is jolly and merry in the season of their judgment. The reality of Christmas for the world is their condemnation. Jesus as the Babe is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, because they are blinded to the reality of who He really is. They want a Babe who will grow up to be the Prince of Peace in a better world that man has made.

The child of God sees the Babe of Bethlehem through the spectacles of faith and, therefore, his celebration takes on a deeply spiritual meaning. Jesus is God in the flesh. As God He humbled Himself became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He is the King of the Church and not of the world. He is the Savior of His people and as such, He walked the way of the cross taking on Himself the iniquity of His people. The Joy of Christmas for the child of God must be the joy of Simeon when he beheld the Babe: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people

Israel." (Luke 2:29-32) The reality of Christmas for us is Salvation. This provides the peace that passes all understanding.

When you and I are tempted to get caught up in the turmoil and confusion of the celebration of this world's Christmas, remember that they have their reward. They will reap judgment on their heads because they despised the Son of God. It is a celebration born of a hatred of God, and it deliberately attempts to conceal the real meaning of Christmas. Celebrate we must and we will, but remember in all our

celebration, never lose sight of God in the Babe of Bethlehem. For only then is He the Balm of Gilead to the battle scarred child of God. Above all, do not forget that beyond the manger looms the forboding spectacle of the cross. A cross which the world hates because it implies humiliation and judgment. To you and me it is the answer of our anguished prayer of "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." The answer comes "Thy sins are forgiven." Thanks be to God. Let us celebrate Christmas with a Joy unspeakable.

Feature

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

by Lois Kamps

Lois is a member of our Faith Church

Have you ever wondered why we celebrate Christmas on December 25? Do we know for certain the date of Christ's birth? Do you know when the customs of gift-giving, lighting of candles and erection of Christmas trees began?

Although the history surrounding the origin of the Christmas festival is still very unclear, there is evidence that the earliest feast of the Nativity was celebrated in the early fourth century. In order to understand how Christmas came to be celebrated on December 25 in the West and eventually throughout the entire world, we should first take a look at a festival called Epiphany which had developed in the East in the early fourth century. This feast, held on January 6, celebrated both the baptism and birth of Christ. This date is connected with a pagan water festival in Alexandria in relation to the winter solstice, the time of year when the sun is farthest south of the

equator, thus marking the time when the days begin to get longer. We also know that some Gnostics in Alexandria kept January 6 as the date of Christ's baptism as early as the second century. The Gnostics were adoptionists, therefore believing that Christ's baptism was also the divine birth of the Redeemer. In any case, January 6, was widely observed by the orthodox in the East as the birth and baptism of Jesus.

About the same time in the fourth century, the Nativity festival was celebrated on December 25 in the West. There are two ideas which would account for Christ's birth being celebrated on December 25. The date was partly determined by the idea that the birth of the world took place on the vernal equinox (March 25). Its new birth in Christ would also be at the same moment. This date (March 25) would correspond to the conception by the Virgin Mary and therefore the actual birth of Christ would be nine months later, on

December 25.

A more likely idea is that the date was influenced by a series of heathen festivals kept in Rome in the month of December. These heathen festivals - the Saturnalia, Sigillaria, Juvenalia and Brumalia (or Sol Invictus) commemorated universal freedom and the unconquered sun and were great holidays especially for slaves and children. The Sol Invictus celebrated the victory of light over darkness and the lengthening of the sun's rays at the winter solstice. For the church, there was symbolical importance in the relation between the feast of the birth of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world and the festival of the unconquered sun, which on December 25 (after the winter solstice) breaks the growing power of darkness and sheds light anew.

The gift-giving we associate with Christmas has its origin in connection with similar customs practiced at the Roman Saturnalia. Saturnalia was the feast of Saturn, when all labor ceased, prisoners

and slaves were freed and all people rejoiced. At the end of the Saturnalia was a feast called Sigillaria, when miniature images of the gods, waxtapers and all sorts of gifts were given to children and relatives, and trees were erected.

The two celebrations of Epiphany and Christmas arose independently of each other, the one in the East, the other in the West, but eventually both parts of the church adopted each other's celebration. Christmas became the feast of the Nativity, while Epiphany represented in the East the baptism of Christ and in the West the quest of the Magi.

And now just a thought to contemplate during the coming holiday season: Will knowing that our present day Christmas is the transformation of heathen festivals and that the gift-giving custom had its origin in the honor of a heathen god, draw our attention away from gifts and trees and toward the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World, our Saviour?

Young People, here is a must for your reading. Whether you are married, contemplating it, dating, or have no present intentions, this book is for you. The book explains marriage from the Word of God as the mystery of Christ and the Church.

READ

MARRIAGE. The Mystery of Christ and the Church

by Rev. David Engelsma

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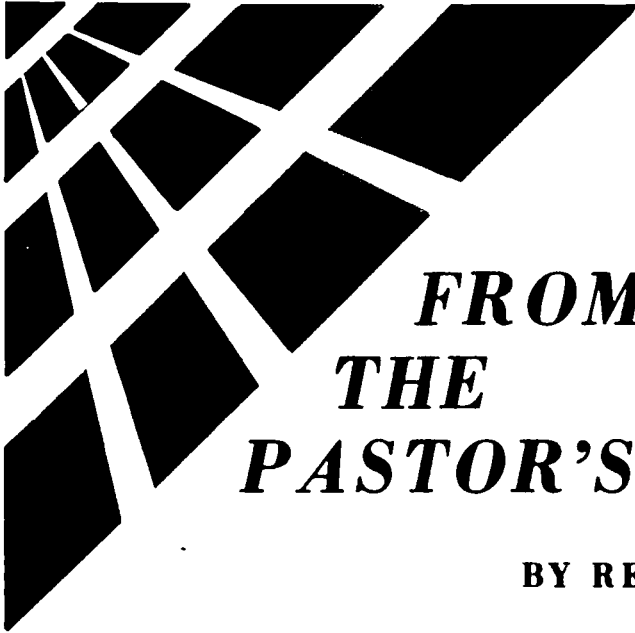
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FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

"And you shall call his name 'Jesus' " - Matthew 1:21

Soon it will be the time for our Christmas programs and celebrations. We will not hold "mass" as the name "Christmas" originally meant in the Romish church. We will use the word uncritically and put new wine in the old bottles; we will celebrate the great mystery of godliness. God is manifested in the flesh, and after the suffering of death was taken up in glory!

Literally, this command to call the child of Mary by the name Jesus, was given to Joseph in a dream at night by the angel of the Lord. Many men and husbands have been confronted with profound and difficult problems which disturb their hearts deeply. The one problems which disturbs a righteous man more than any, would be to be married or betrothed to a faithless wife. It touches the most sacred of all relationships between men - the marriage-tie! Unfaithfulness in this relationship reflects the deeper unfaithfulness toward God as our covenant God. A marriage-breaker is a

covenant-breaker and a desecrater of all that is holy. Such we expect from men and women who are profane; who do not distinguish between what is sacred and what is polluted. Such was the problem of Joseph who had betrothed to himself Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The plain fact was that Mary was to have a child, and presently she would be "great with child." (Luke 2:5) Joseph knew that he was not the father of Mary's child which she carried under her heart. There was only one alternative left, as far as Joseph could reason, and that was that Mary had been unfaithful and had played the harlot, or at least she was guilty of adultery. Joseph was not a man that believed the worst, being subject to morbid suspicions. He loved Mary very much and it pained him, therefore, the more deeply for her sake. He was a just man. He had not known Mary in pre-marital relationship. Mary was, therefore, not that kind of maiden either. As far as Joseph knew she was a virgin, who had

never known a man. He also knew that she was a sinner who had need of confessing her sins and to be covered by the blood of sprinkling.

Now his confidence is shattered as far as Mary's marital integrity was concerned. She was to have a child. Since the world began, no women ever gave birth to a child without the "will of man." Joseph's soul was troubled till deep in his slumbering hours at night. He is in need of help and mercy from the Lord. Mary, too, must be protected...and her **child!** On the pages of history, Jesus must not be known as an illegitimate bastard, nor Mary an adulteress. Joseph was to be the God-appointed "father" of His Son, who is called "Immanuel - God-with-us!" All must stand forth in spotless beauty of faithfulness, honor and glory. God must intervene to interpret from His own Word of promise what had occurred in Nazareth's fairest maiden, most blessed among women. Not only must Joseph's confidence be restored, but it must be brought to that high level of faith in which will serve the counsel of God willingly. He must, as an act of faith, take Mary to wife fearless of all consequences. He must say: "I believe the Lord's word." His faith and confession must be the counterpart of Mary's resigned faith which answered the angel in Nazareth. "Be it unto me according to thy word." (Luke 1:38) In that united faith these two, Joseph and Mary, find each other, and they marry in the Lord.

Joseph has a fatherly duty to perform. He must "name" Mary's child. God had selected the name for His Son in the flesh. The angel had said to Mary, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name **JESUS.**" (Luke 1:31) Now the angel says to Joseph that he is to perform that sacred task. He is to circumcise that son on the eighth day. We read, "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child,

he was called **JESUS**, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb." (Luke 2:22)

Now for Joseph, this was to be obedience of faith, nothing less. He was to believe that Mary's condition of being with child was the fulfillment of the word of the prophets, spoken to a very wicked and disobedient king in Israel, Ahab by name. This king was in dire straits at the time that Isaiah spoke this word concerning the "virgin who would be with child" in David's royal line. Rezin, king of Damascus, and Pekah, king of Samaria, were confederate kings, who had a concerted effort to dethrone the sons of David from the throne in Jerusalem, and to place another on this throne. This would be to nullify the word of Nathan, the prophet to David, that there should not lack a son of David's throne from David's loins. These machinations of the wicked the LORD himself would bring to nought. The Lord would fulfill his own word to David by the wonder-birth of His only begotten Son from a virgin. It was the "sign" of the virgin which was given to an unbelieving king. The true Israelites clung to this prophetic word concerning the birth of **IMMANUEL**, God-with-us. Joseph was not hearing a strange text recited to him by the angel in his dream at night. It was a word which was well-known and which was the sure word of prophecy, which shines as a light in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in the hearts of the waiting people of God.

These people were waiting for the Redeemer to deliver them from their sins. He looked for the Redeemer to come out of Zion. They looked for the fulfillment of the Word which says, "For unto us a child is born, for unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his Name shall be Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." What Israel was waiting for, more than watchmen for the morning light, was now being

realized. A Child is to be born, a son is to be given, and thou shalt call his name **JESUS!**

This one and this one only shall save his people from their sins. He will save his "people," the congregation of God. He will come to save all his people from their sins, both in the Old and New Testaments. Yes, he will save them from their "sins." He will stand in the midst of the multitude of his people and take all their sins upon

himself as the perfect sacrifice. He "shall save" them from their sins. He will fulfill all righteousness.

Take Mary to be thy wife, Joseph. She is not guilty of adultery, but she will be the mother of the Son of God. The Son of God will be born from a woman - Seed of the woman is He. In Him will all the seed be blessed. For if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.



Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

I'VE GOT IT MADE!

So says one who thinks he knows all the rules and has made par for the course. The rules are found in the Bible, and the course is the whole of life from birth to death. Actually, there is only One who has "parred" the course, and He has not only "birdied" it, but has made "a hole in one" off every tee.

Sometimes it is a little difficult talking to a "sinless perfectionist" about his "I've Got It Made" or "I Have Arrived" doctrine. It's difficult not only because he has such a facility of shooting Bible texts at me like a thick hail and then challenging me to retaliate with a similar deluge, but also because I'm not always

up there, where he always seems to be, on Cloud Nine. It's difficult for me because I'm one of those men who is always carrying around with me, my own Slough of Despond, and that Slough bothers me. So does the fellow who doesn't have one (a slough), or doesn't know that he has one; he bothers me, too. I'm worried about him. He knows nothing about that Slough, not anymore, anyway. He got out of it, and on up to the mountain top, where he has been ever since, with his head in the clouds, like the disciples on Mt. Transfiguration. He hardly knows what is going on down below in the every day world of Sin, Slough and War with

Apollyon. There is no more battle, for there is no more sin. Within his own gaggle everyone is honking, silly geese that they are, "We have overcome!" No more does he pray the Disciples' Prayer, "And forgive us our sins." Now he does not sin anymore. He has reached the state of "sinless perfection."

Is that because he is such a profound Bible student? Does the deep Bible student, the one well acquainted with the teaching of Scripture, go around claiming that he is perfectly able to, and actually does perfectly keep the commandments? I am thinking of such deep Bible students like James, Job, John, Solomon and Paul. You don't get into the Scriptures to much depth if your instructor does not come at you with something like this: "Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?" and then teach you to answer, "No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, either of himself, or by any grace received, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but does daily break them in thought, word and deed." Well, now, is that answer true, or is it just the word of man? Let the best Bible scholars answer. James says, "In many things we all offend." (Jas. 3:2) Job put it this way, "What is man, that he should (could) be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should (could) be righteous? Behold, He putteth no trust in His saints (holy ones!); yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man who drinketh iniquity like water?" (Job 15:14-16) John says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I Jn. 1:8) Solomon says, "There is not one just man on earth who does good and never sins." (Eccl. 7:20) In fact, "there is no one who does not sin." (I K. 8:46) So that self-deceived (says John) perfectionist would rather that Moses "butt out" and not come with his contention that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Gn. 8:21)

There was never a man nearer to the highest perfection than Job, yet he said, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse." (Job 9:20)

When we say "no mere man" has the ability perfectly to keep the commandments of God, we make distinction between ourselves and Christ, who, rendering perfect obedience for us, was no "mere man." By a "mere man," we mean one who is man and no more than man. Christ is not a mere man; He is God and man with two distinct natures in one person forever. Was there ever any mere man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God? Yes, before the fall Adam and Eve were created in righteousness and holiness, capable of and perfectly equipped for keeping the law. So Moses and Solomon in their infallibly inspired writings teach us. (Gen. 1:27; Eccl. 7:29) Shall any mere man ever be able to keep perfectly the commandments of God? Yes, through the grace of God the redeemed from mankind (Rev. 14:4) shall be made perfectly to conform to the moral law. Paul says that when sin and death itself are destroyed, we shall have the victory of perfection. (I Cor. 15:26,56,57) The perfecting of the saints, when the entire Church becomes a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 4:11-13; 5:26,27), shall occur in the coming of the New Heaven and the New Earth. (Rev. 21:2,11) There are now also spirits of just men made perfect, but they are "in heaven," in the "heavenly Jerusalem." (Heb. 12:22,23) Yes, man renewed by grace will be able perfectly to keep all God's commandments in the glorified state. When it comes to the question, "Can 'mere man' in this life perfectly keep the commandments of God?" we must answer that man, renewed and reelected, can through God's grace keep them, but not perfectly, as Paul says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."

(Phil. 3:12) Has any mere man since the fall ever in this life perfectly kept or obeyed the law of God? No. Christ did so keep it, but He is not a mere man.

When Paul maintains, "I am not already perfect, he is certainly speaking as a regenerated person. So also in Romans 7, he is not speaking as an unconverted, unregenerate person, but as the best Christian must confess. The most eminent saints confess and miserably feel their sinfulness, their indwelling sin, i.e., corruption subdued, but still lurking in the heart. That is what Paul makes so plain in Rom. 7:14-24, there giving proof "sinless perfection" is not possible in this life. What he says there compares in the Authorized Version with the following paraphrase: "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am flesh, sold as a slave to sin. I am doing something strange, because I don't do what I like but what I hate. But if I do what I don't like, I agree that the law is right. It is no longer I doing it, but sin living (at home) in me. I know that nothing lives in me, that is, in my flesh. I'm **willing**, but I'm not **doing** what is right. I don't do the good things I like, but I do the evil I don't like. Now if I do what I don't like, it is no longer I doing it but sin living in me. So I find it a rule: When I want to do what is **right**, **wrong** suggestions crowd in. In my inmost heart I agree with God's law, but in my whole natural make-up I see another law fighting against the law that my mind approves of. It makes me a prisoner to the sin ruling my body. What a miserable man I am! Who will rescue me from the body that brings me to death? Thank God-He does it through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Every man who has the true Christian hope (1 Jn. 3:3) purifies himself. Therefore, every Christian in this world has in him impurity, i.e., sin.

When the Scripture speaks of certain men being perfect, as Job "was perfect and upright" (Job 1:1.8; 9:20), David was "the perfect man" (Ps. 37:37; 40:12), and

Noah "was a just man and perfect" (Gn. 6:9), the meaning is that they were comparatively perfect, that is, there was a marked contrast between them and others. They were constitutively perfect, i.e., constituted perfect in all the essential elements of character, though in an imperfect degree; perfectly a human being (but only as renewed in Christ), but not a perfect human being. They were representatively perfect, i.e., every believer is perfect and complete in Christ their Representative. (Rom. 6; 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:10)

The man who wrote "Rock of Ages" said, "What think you concerning the tenet of sinless perfection which supposes that the very inbeing of sin may on earth be totally exterminated from the hearts of the regenerate and that believers may here be pure as the angels that never fell, yea, (I tremble at the blasphemy), holy as Christ himself? ...Indwelling sin and unholy tempers do most certainly receive their death wound in regeneration, but they do not quite expire till the renewed soul is taken up from earth to heaven." That same man, Augustus Montague Toplady, said, "Would you see a perfect saint? You 'must needs go out of the world,' then you must go to heaven for the sight. Forasmuch as there only are 'the spirits of just men made perfect.' (Heb. 12:23) This earth on which we live never bore but three sinless persons: our first parents in the short state of innocence (goodness, RCH), and Jesus Christ in the days of His abode below. Of the whole human race besides, it always was and ever will be true, that there is 'not a just man upon earth who doeth good and sinneth not.' One man pictures "The Life That Wins" so: "I have learned that, as I trust Christ in surrender, there need be no fighting against sin, but complete freedom from the power and even the the desire of sin. I have learned that this freedom, this more than conquering, is sustained in unbroken continuance as I

simply recognize that Christ is my cleansing, reigning life.” (Charles Gallaudet Trumbull) In great contrast to this, another man sees the Christian ever as “The Fainting Warrior,” saying, “I know it is my duty to be perfect, but I am conscious I cannot be. I know that every time I commit sin, I am guilty, and yet I am quite certain that I must sin - that my nature is such that I cannot help it. I feel that I am unable to get rid of it...It is my agonizing death struggle with my corruption that proves me to be a child of God. These two natures will never cease to struggle so long as we are in this world. The old nature will never give up; it will

never cry truce; it will never ask for a treaty to be made between the two...What a fight is that! It were worth an angel’s while to come from the remotest fields of ether to behold such a conflict!” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in a sermon, Jan. 23, 1859) So you see why even the great apostle Paul could not say, “I’ve got it made!” nor could he even think it of any of the saints. Instead he prayed for them, “The God of peace himself make you holy in every way and keep your spirit and life and body sound and without a fault when our Lord Jesus Christ comes. You can depend on Him who calls you - He will do it.” (1 Thes. 5:23f, Beck’s NT)

Hold Fast Our Heritage

WHY PROTESTANT REFORMED?

by Alvin Rau

Mr. Rau is a member of our Hope Church.

I was asked to write an article on how we came into the Protestant Reformed Churches, and this I will try to do.

I was born into the Lutheran Church, and grew to young manhood within that church. My wife was born and raised in the German Reformed Church. Although you have two different denominations here, there was a lot in common that we were taught within those churches. Both were Arminian in their teachings!

The belief of the Arminian is not unknown to me. Oh, we were brought up to believe that there is a God, and even that we sin against him. We were even taught to confess that “I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth” and what follows. We could rattle that off from one end to the other, but we were never taught what all this fully means. We were taught that God was

good, loving and kind. We were never taught of the sovereign rule of God who governs and controls all things, so that nothing comes by chance. So, if the storm blew down someone’s house or barn, it was just a bad break. If the land was dry, and the crops were burning up, and the rains came and fell on one man’s land and not on the other, the man who received the rain was lucky, and for the other one it was just tough luck. Or again, if a man while driving on a icy road went out of control and crashed his car, and was killed, it often was said if he wouldn’t have been on the road at that time, he could still be with us to-day. That little word *if*, how God dishonoring when used the wrong way.

What a HORRIBLE bondage to live under. There is no comfort for life. There is no comfort in death. If there is no sovereign rule by the Mighty God, and if the whole creation is not under God’s

control so that nothing comes by chance, how can God rule over the hearts of men? Thanks be to God who governs and controls all things, so that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head. He makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth to live unto him.

The first time we heard of the Protestant Reformed Churches was in about 1955, when Rev. Herman Mensch, then minister in the German Reformed Churches, accepted the call from the Leola, South Dakota, Reformed Congregation coming from Isabel, South Dakota. He was a graduate of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. The Leola congregation did not have a parsonage at that time, so they rented a vacant farm house close to where we were living. Rev. Mensch purchased their milk and eggs from us, and that was mainly how we met them. It was under his teaching that we got to know what the Scriptures teach of the sovereign rule of God, of the God who rules even over the hearts of men, and of a God who elects and reprobates. These were terms which we had never heard of in the churches we were members of. He instructed us in the Reformed confessions and guided us toward the Protestant Reformed Churches. I am grateful to him for the instruction he gave us. He said that in those churches the Reformed confessions were maintained, and that those truths were faithfully proclaimed from those pulpits. He instructed us not to follow a man, but that where those truths were maintained, it is our calling to unite ourselves with it.

Oh, those were days of trying the spirits - to see if they are really of God. For you see, I was not just so ready to leave the Lutheran Church. To leave there, and go elsewhere, would have been rather easy. To say I'm leaving because what I have been taught here is not true is another matter. But God does not leave us to our own ways, for the work which He

begins, He also finishes. He leaves us no peace in our own ways, but he comes again and again with his Word and Spirit. I remember very clearly a sermon by Rev. H. Veldman preached in Leola on question and answer 54 of the Heidelberg Catechism: "What believest thou concerning the Holy Catholic church of Christ?" He declared unto us the full counsel of God: How the sovereign God from all eternity had that plan for that church, and that in time he called her into being, governing and controlling all things for the sake of the ingathering of her, and how he keeps and preserves her unto all eternity. Oh, I know we've had the privilege of hearing many a sermon declaring the full counsel of God unto us since then. But at that time all these things were new to us, and there was always that question, is it really so? and if it is, what do I believe concerning it?

Maybe it is true that you appreciate the truth of God's Word as maintained in the Protestant Reformed churches more by coming from the outside, but it is nothing to be desired. It doesn't take long and we take these truths for granted too. As knowledge in these truths grew, and faith was strengthened, we felt it our calling to move to where it was possible for our children also to attend a Christian Day school. Therefore, we chose the Grand Rapids, Michigan area, for here we heard that they have Christian Schools that instruct the children in harmony with what the Reformed confessions also teach. Even though we had never been in Grand Rapids before and had met only eight or ten people from the Protestant Reformed churches we felt that in a place where the truth of God's word is taught and the Reformed Confessions are maintained, there we would find people of God. Where the people of God are, there is a bond of faith which is stronger than any friendship, or even blood relation, so that we could and can say, "Thy God is my God." That bond of faith we have

experienced in the Protestant Reformed churches. I have yet to find a person to say to us, that he can't speak, or have anything to do with us, because we came from outside the Protestant Reformed Churches. When I speak to them, I find that they will also speak to me.

So, looking back these eighteen years, what shall we say? This we will say, "My life in all its perfect plan was ordered, ere my days began!"

Looking to the present, shall we say we have attained perfection, because we have a much better knowledge now of God's Word than before we were members of the Protestant Reformed Churches? Oh, no! As our knowledge increases, so our calling becomes so much greater to walk before Him in love and to serve him. We may not willfully neglect the study of God's Word, or willingly walk in ways of sin, and then expect God's blessing to rest

upon us, "for God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap." So we say "Hereto has the Lord helped us."

As to the future, after having been a member within the Protestant Reformed Churches all these years, we rest in the confidence that, if we and our children and children's children remain by the grace of God, faithful to the confessions which God has so graciously entrusted to our care, and walk in his truth, then we can confess within the Protestant Reformed Churches that "I believe I am a member of that Holy Catholic Church of Christ." We also can confess that short, little sentence at the end of the answer of question 54 of the Heidelberg Catechism, that speaks volumes in just a few words: "I believe that I am, and FOREVER shall remain a living member thereof!"

George M. Ophoff (2)

by Prof. H. Hanko

At this point I must say a little bit about what prompts this series of articles which will be appearing from time to time in our **Beacon Lights**.

The series of articles has its birth in a rather extended discussion between myself and a good friend of mine who is also a faithful member of our churches. We were sitting in my study and pondering, as I recall it, subjects related to the 50th anniversary of our churches. This was already the latter part of last winter or the early part of last spring. This friend of whom I speak expressed the opinion that our churches have a unique and glorious heritage which the Lord our God has given us. He expressed concern that our young people, especially, were perhaps not sufficiently impressed with what a won-

derful heritage it is that we have. He was referring not only to the heritage of the truth, that is, as it has come down to us over the ages, but especially the heritage which is uniquely ours as Protestant Reformed Churches.

As the conversation progressed, we began talking about the point I was trying to make in the last article - that this heritage comes to us through men of God's choice. We were talking about the fact that God has also given to our churches men who were "men of the hour," precisely fitted for the work of the church, men who belong to our own history. These men were, of course, the Reverends Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff. To know our history and understand our heritage, we concluded that it is

necessary to know the men whom God gave to us. It is necessary to know the kind of men they were. It is necessary to know what they did. It is necessary to know what they thought and believed and how they fought for the cause of the gospel. History - our history - is not an outline of factual data and dates, but a flesh and blood history of men of God.

If our young people know these men, they will know also an important part of our heritage.

Our churches possess now, through the labors of Mrs. Homer Hoeksema, an outstanding biography of Rev. H. Hoeksema, but they have nothing which can be preserved of Rev. Ophoff, other than his writings. Gradually, the idea formed in our minds to write a series of articles which would attempt to bring before the consciousness of our people also this stalwart defender of the faith. We are the losers if the memory of what God did through Rev. Ophoff is forgotten. Many of our people, of course, remember him. They worked with him, were instructed by him, learned of him, heard him preach, knew him intimately, and could talk of him for hours with love and respect in their every word. Many of our people, particularly the new generation, do not know him - other than what they heard from others, here a snatch and there a story.

I am a poor choice to be the one to be writing this series. There are, no doubt, others who knew him more intimately than I and who could do this better than I can. I knew him when I entered the seminary and received my seminary instruction from him in part. I knew him in the last years of his life. I knew him primarily **officially** as my teacher and sometimes as my pastor, but the **unofficial** Rev. Ophoff I knew only scantily.

My friend was his son - Herman Ophoff. So, as the idea grew to write a series of articles about him, I told Herm that he would have to do the leg work.

This he did. He spent a large number of weeks talking to people, speaking to his own brothers, recalling what he remembered from his own life in the parsonage, digging out data which even he did not know, collecting pictures of interest, and handing it all over to me. Much of the material has now been collected. We have pored over it together and have talked hour after hour about Rev. Ophoff, and gradually there has emerged what we think is a fairly accurate picture of one who was a leader among us.

The manuscript of these articles is going to be presented to the members of Rev. Ophoff's family and is going to be read by others - older men in the churches, for their perusal and criticism; and we hope that what emerges is a series of articles which will give to those of our readers who never knew George Ophoff, a bit of an idea of the kind of man he was and the role he played in our history. We have tried to present him, to use the words of Oliver Cromwell, with his "warts." We have done this for a very specific purpose.

That brings me to what we hope to accomplish with these articles. We are not interested in a mere character sketch. This in itself might be fascinating and interesting. There are many stories which are still told, perhaps by this time with many embellishments, of Rev. Ophoff's "absentmindedness." There have been few, if any, men like him in the history of the church, but this is not our purpose.

Nor is our purpose to bring our readers to worshipful reverence before the shrine of a mere man. He himself would have detested this and it would be an insult to his memory to engage in this kind of "hero-worship."

We are interested especially in two things. The first is to give our readers some insights into how God prepares and uses particular men with individual gifts and characters for his work. The second purpose is to renew in our young people

an interest in and love for our heritage as Protestant Reformed Churches.

If these articles give an appreciation for what God has wrought, and if the zeal and love for the truth which characterized Rev. Ophoff seizes the hearts of his spiritual heirs, these articles will not have been written in vain.



CRITIQUE

ANOTHER ANTICHRIST

by Agatha Lubbers

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.”

John 2:18

“Then if any one say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Matthew 24:23-27

With comforting and instructive words Christ speaks to his disciples and to the Church of the New Dispensation. Matthew 24 is the record of Christ's reassuring words to his disciples on the Mount of Olives just two or three days before he would be crucified in Jerusalem. Christ was telling his disciples and he tells the Church of the New Dispensation that they must not be deceived by the false prophets and false Christs who will tell

great lies concerning His coming. The apostle John says that there will be many who will claim that they are Christ, or there will be those who will make claims for the “messiahship” of some person other than the Christ of the Scriptures, but the Church is called to exercise the “unction from the Holy One” whereby she “knows all things.” (Cf. 1 John 2:20.)

During every area of the history of the Church since Pentecost, there have

been those who have claimed to be the promised Messiah or have claimed to be the Comforter (Paraclete) promised by Christ in John 14. These deceivers are those whom Christ warns the Church to shun. He tells His Church that they are "profane and vain babblers." They are liars and their intention is to lead men astray, and if it were possible, they would even deceive the very elect of God.

Such a deceiver was the infamous Montanus of the second century A.D. who claimed to be the promised "Paraclete" or Comforter of John 14. Another such deceiver and pseudo-Christ was Mohammed who claimed to be the greatest of all the prophets. He prostituted the Scriptures into the service of his godless purposes, when he formed the ideas of Mohammedanism - ideas that still exist in the **Koran**. Joseph Smith of Almyra, New York, was a similar deceiver and an antichrist in nineteenth century America who claimed to have uncovered special information which is recorded in the profane **Book of Mormon**. These ideas have resulted in the formation of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of all cultists is their claim that they have received some esoteric instructions (information of the initiated only) by special revelation which supercede and supplant any other ideas - including the instruction found in the Holy Scriptures. These deceivers and godless men are instruments of Satan, and they lead many astray. Concerning them, the apostle Paul writes as follows in I Timothy 4:1-3:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and **doctrines of devils**; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to

abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

During the past two years **Time** magazine has carried several reports in the religious news section concerning one of these devilish cults which Jesus Christ and the Spirit of Christ through his apostles has taught the Church to recognize and to expect. The ideas of a cult known as the "Moonists" are developed and propogated in a book by a "Rev." Sun Myung Moon from Korea. The book bears the ostentatious title **Divine Principle** and is the "Bible" of the followers of Moon, who once again has received much national news coverage. His Unification Church (a name which makes his organization suspect) has been in court in New York State to regain a tax exemption for an estate in the town of Greenburgh, N.Y., where according to **Time**, it has purchased nine million dollars worth of properties since 1972. In addition the Unification Church of Moon has occupied some of the time and space in the news media because of the growing opposition to the Moon cult for "what it is doing to the minds of its young converts." **Time** says the following:

"In Dutchess County, N.Y., District Attorney Albert Rosenblatt is investigating complaints from parents that their children have been 'brain-washed' in high-pressure courses at the church's Barrytown training center. Rosenblatt also wonders why so many Moon cultists require emergency-room treatment at a local hospital.

"Around the country, hundreds of parents have been driven to near hysteria by changes in their convert children's behavior and by reports of brainwashing. They are filing suits and banding into anti-Moon

groups. Some parents have even resorted to abduction. In many cases they use 'Deprogrammer' Ted Patrick, who for a fee conducts counter-brainwashing of cultists.'

The cultic and sectarian nature of the Unification Church of Moon is evident when the goals and the origin of this movement are investigated. His goal is nothing less than the unification of all mankind. His followers believe him to be the "Lord of the Second Advent" - i.e. the Second Coming of Christ. A study of **Divine Principle**, which appeared in 1957, reveals that the ideas of Moonism are a strange secretism in which the dualism of Taoism,* numerology, and metaphors from Moon's electrical engineering are fused together. **Divine Principle** points to a new Messiah from Korea. Although **Divine Principle** does not say Moon is that Messiah, it is clear that he considers himself this Messiah. This is the obvious conclusion. His disciples and his followers claim that he is this Messiah.

Moon states in his **Divine Principle** that Adam and Eve were to be joined in divine matrimony and should have been perfect parents. They would have formed with God a kind of Trinity to shape the world, but Eve sinned by committing adultery with an archangel, who thereby became Satan. Jesus was intended to be a second Adam and would create the perfect family. However, he was crucified before

*Taoism is a popular Chinese religion which is purportedly based on the ideas of Laotzu (c. 604-531 B.C.) and Chuang-tzu. The ideas of Taoism are selected from many sources and is characterized by a plethora of gods. Superstition, alchemy, divination, and magic are also some of the chief aspects of Taoism.

Association with this form of Paganism should be reason enough for Christians to reject the ideas of the Moonists.

he was able to marry. Jesus therefore redeemed mankind spiritually, but he was not able to redeem humanity physically. This is the task that is left over for the Lord of the Second Advent. This Lord of the Second Advent is obviously Moon himself. His second wife, who he claims has not reached his own spiritual perfection, will eventually reach this perfection because they are the new Adam and Eve who will physically redeem the world. The children of this union will be the first of a new perfect world.

Such anti-Christian philosophizing can best be called Neo-Manichaeism of Neo-Gnosticism.

In public meetings Moon is reported as the "brotherhood-minded Christian clergyman and founder of the ecumenical Unification Church." He is immediately suspect, however, when a Roman Catholic Monsignor (a nominal Christian at best) could offer prayers at a Waldorf banquet in his honor and the Roman Catholic seer and soothsayer, Jeanne Dixon, could say, "Bless you, Reverend Moon, for your message." Birds of a feather flock together! Idolators extol each other, not God.

In private meetings Moon claims to be "greater than Jesus himself" which is the same claim that Mohammed and many other anti-Christian religionists have made. Moon says, "God is now throwing Christianity away and is now establishing a new religion, and this new religion is Unification Church." He has also said, "I am your brain" and "the whole world is in my hand, and I will conquer and subjugate the world."

The ideas of Moon developed from an earlier Korean messianic movement. He said after leaving this movement, "Jesus revealed the truth to me, and I was instructed by God to go to America - the second Israel - and lay a foundation for the Second Coming."

In February of 1974, Moon obtained from former President Nixon personal

thanks at a White House meeting because he began organizing a "God loves Nixon" campaign in the face of rising criticism during the Watergate scandals.

The man is an obvious opportunist. He takes certain truths such as that found in Revelation 3:16, and perverts it for his own purposes. God has certainly rejected nominal Christianity as he rejected the Laodiceans. He has "spewed them out of His mouth." God has not done this, so that he can permit the Moonists to do their tricks. This Moon would have us believe Jesus Christ forsakes every Church which does not teach the truth or walk purely. Moonism is only part of that spewed out and rejected Church.

Jorge Lara-Braud, a theologian affiliated with the National Council of Churches, who now oppose Moonism, says, "Moon is a misguided religious populist. He is preying on the fears and disillusionments of disaffected Americans." Paul Moore, a Nazarene minister, of the more fundamentalist brand says, "Rev. Moon is a liar and a deceiver. He denies the Trinity and the inspiration of the Scriptures."

While the analysis of Jorge Lara-Braud is patently correct and while the comments of Paul Moore are also true, it is more accurate to say that Moon is one of those whom the Spirit expressly says that "they shall come in the latter days." Today they seem to sprout like toadstools. The apostle John says the following:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." I John 4:1-4.

Let the church of Jesus Christ of the twentieth century beware of every form of the New Gnosticism and the New Manichaeism which sprouts forth today. The New Gnosticism and the New Manichaeism of the twentieth century denies the Scriptures. Theirs is the "Knowledge" or "science falsely so-called" to which the apostle Paul refers to in I Timothy 6:20. These profane and vain babblings the Church of Christ must avoid at all costs.

"Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." Revelation 16:15b.

YOUNG PEOPLE

Are You Giving?

Read *Christian Stewardship* by Rev. Dale H. Kuiper in the November 15th issue of *The Standard Bearer*. Giving of what God gives us is for young people as well as for parents.

Contribution

YOUTH, *Remember thy Creator*

by Jim Vander Kolk

Jim is a member of our Holland Church.

In Ecclesiastes 12:1 we read, "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Remembering our creator in the days of our youth is of vital importance and concerns each and every one of us. Do we as young people of God's church heed to this admonition with enough sincerity? The society in which we live today is so modern and so complex, whose standard of living is geared so high that we as young people have so little time. We have so little time because in our youth we are more apt to busy ourselves with things enjoyable to the flesh. It is mainly for this reason that we must now, more than ever, heed this admonition of God's word.

In Ecclesiastes 11:9 we read, "Rejoice, oh young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Again and again scripture holds before us the days of our youth as something which we will have to account for when we stand before the throne of Christ. Isn't it so easy for us as young people to shrug our shoulders and say that we will study and take heed to this word of God to a fuller extent when we get older? At the present time we have so much to do, so much to see, and the Word of God just becomes the thing of the past. We are too busy now rejoicing in the days of our youth.

But what does Scripture say? "Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth." And why is this so important in the days of our youth? Because after our

youth the years would draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them. And if we say we will make time when we get older, we lie; for if we cannot make time in our youth we will also make no effort in our older years.

Oh yes, it's so easy for us to say, "Don't I go to catechism? Don't I attend Young People's? And when any other activities demand some of my time, don't I fulfill these obligations? I did my share." How wrong can we be, young people. We never do our share. How often do we go to these societies thoroughly prepared so that we can follow through with the demands of society life in **programs** as well as activities.

How often do we prepare ourselves for the Sabbath Day? We by nature are prone to take the Lord's Day literally as a day of rest, preparing ourselves for the week to come. Rather, the opposite should be true. The rest of the week must serve the Lord's Day. This call means, especially to us as children of God, that in our walk and way of life we are **not** first accountable to man but rather accountable to God. God **speaks** and we must **obey**.

Man by nature is so perverse that he can and will do anything that will glorify the flesh; but oh what a struggle to do the things God requires of us. We as Protestant Reformed Young People have been given the most priceless heritage that God has ever given to His church here on the earth. We have the purest manifestation of the Word of God. It is our calling as young people to study that manifestation in the days of our youth in everything we do; because if in our youth we have no time for it, then we never shall.

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Karla Kalsbeek

FROM OUR SOUTH HOLLAND CHURCH:

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Eriks were blessed with the birth of a daughter.

Mr. James Bruinsma and Miss Kathy Hoekstra were united in marriage on October 10.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. John R. Zandstra and one baptized child were transferred to our Southwest Church at their request.

Public confession of faith of Mary Zandstra took place on October 26.

Mr. & Mrs. Steve Bultema were blessed with the birth of a baby girl, Kristen Lynn.

FROM OUR FIRST CHURCH:

Covenant Christian High School presented a Reformation Day Chapel on October 30, in First Church.

On November 13, Prof. Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanko spoke and showed slides on their recent Australasian tour.

FROM OUR SOUTHEAST CHURCH:

The Federation Board sponsored a picture party of the past convention.

On October 26 a singspiration was held in Hudsonville Church. Its theme was "The mercies of God" Ps. 67:1.

The membership papers of Miss Linda Vander Vennen have been sent to our Redlands Church.

Upon her request the dismissal papers of Lois Vander Wall were sent to her home.

Upon his request the membership papers of Mr. Peter Vander Schaaf have been transferred to our Holland Church.

FROM OUR LOVELAND CHURCH:

Mr Glenn Griess and Miss Twyla Brummel were united in marriage.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. P. Boer and seven baptized children have been transferred to our South Holland Church.

The membership papers of Daniel Markum have been sent to our Redlands Church.

The public confession of Miss Wanda Kuiper took place on October 19.

The membership papers of Dennis Markum have been transferred to our Redlands Church.

FROM OUR HULL CHURCH:

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Truett Hugg and two baptized children and the membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Bruckbauer have been received from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Onaha.

Mr. & Mrs. Roger Buip were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Mindy Jean.

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Thelmar Jansma and three baptized children have been sent to their home upon their request.

The Young People's Society sponsored a hayride and wiener roast on October 27.

The Young People planned a Reformation Day Singspiration on November 2.

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