BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

MARCH - 1950

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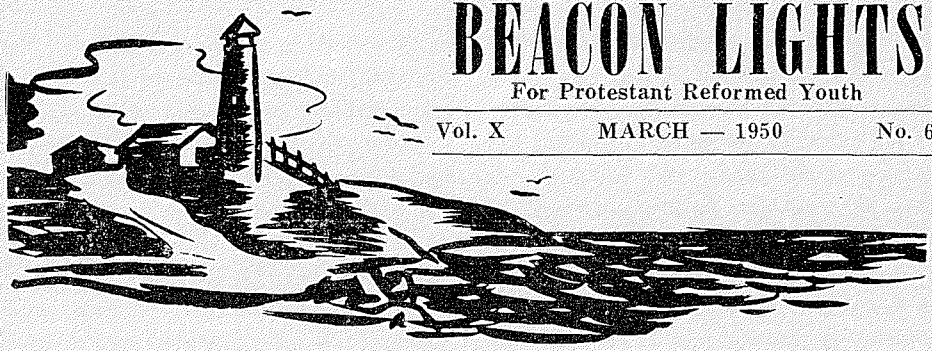


BEACON LIGHTS

For Protestant Reformed Youth

Vol. X MARCH — 1950 No. 6

The Liberated Churches And You

Rev. Homer C. Hoeksema
Doon, Iowa

I have a big order on my hands,—an order, or request, which I received from the staff of **Beacon Lights.** The substance of that order is as follows: "At a recent staff meeting we decided to ask you to write an article or two to clarify the question of the Liberated Churches in relation to ours, for the Young People of our churches". That is, indeed, a big order. Big, in the first place, because the question is a big one and a serious one. Big, in the second place, because I am limited to an article or two in answering or filling the order. Big, in the third place, also because that order must be filled with a view to the "Young People of our Churches". And perhaps the maxim, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread", may be applied in this case; but the fact remains that in a weak moment I gave my promise to the staff. And my material must be in by the 10th of February. And so I must proceed.

Perhaps the title of my article has already caused some of you to pass it by in favor of the next article in our magazine. Perhaps the name "Liberated Churches" scared you off. Possibly the sight of the name has caused some of you young people to say within yourselves: "That's a subject that can much better be left to the ministers, to the consistories, to the classes, and to our synods". But possibly the curiosity of youth has caused you at least to read as far as this. And then you should also read and take this to heart: the question of the Liberated Churches in relation to ours is a vital question not merely for consistories and classes and synods, but a vital question for you, the youth of the Protestant Reformed Churches. A vital question it is basically because in the ultimate analysis it concerns you as members of the body of Jesus Christ. Whatever answer may be given in the future to the question of the Liberated Churches in relation to ours, it is safe to say that that answer will have a tremendous influence upon our Protestant Reformed Churches and their future position and history. And for that reason

alone this is a question which is vital for every Protestant Reformed young man and young woman that is worthy of the name, for all those Protestant Reformed young people who will soon,—if they have not yet done so,—assume the status of full membership in our churches. And wherever the situation in a church is healthy, it is only through that vital interest of the churches at large in such a question that a matter ever reaches the floor of synod and finds an articulate answer. And therefore as Protestant Reformed youth we may not pass this question up.

Nor should we be afraid of the question really. One might almost have thought that **Beacon Lights** was until now trying to maintain a "hands off" policy because, as the staf also brought to my attention, until now, although much has been written in our other papers in regard to this subject, **Beacon Lights** has left it alone. Especially during the past half year, or so, attention has centered within our churches very much on the question of the Liberated Churches in relation to ours. Perhaps the germ **strife** would even be in place in this connection. And there have been some who have given expression to the thought that this so-called strife is nauseating, and that we should have none of it within our churches and in our papers. But that would means death. If we are healthy, we should not be afraid of such strife; nor should we be afraid of a little strong and stern and "straight-from-the-shoulder" language on this subject. Rather we should view it as a mighty striving within the bosom of the churches to come to a correct and sane and sound and honest view of the matter, in order that also our churches officially may give expression to that which is the will of God concerning the question. And so we should not shy away from the subject, but rather face it and investigate it, discuss it and come to conclusions. And perhaps this article or two may serve to arouse some discussion and investigation and interest in the subject on the part of our young people. That, by way of introduction.

But since our subject is far too large to treat within an article or two,—and brief articles, at that,—we shall at least limit the subject in this way, that when we speak of the question of the Liberated Churches in relation to ours, we shall speak concerning the **official** relation between our two groups of churches. And when we speak of "official relation", we refer, of course, to the question whether there shall be correspondence between the Liberated Churches,—or as they are officially known, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (maintaining Article 31 of the Church Order),—and our own Protestant Reformed Churches.

And perhaps already that term correspondence has aroused question in your minds. Perhaps you have heard the term used. Perhaps you have read of it. Possibly you wonder what is meant by correspondence, and by its closely allied terms, **sister churches** and **fraternal relations.** And I believe that in order to have an intelligent discussion of this question we must, therefore, first under-

stand the idea of church correspondence. And in discussing that matter of correspondence lay for ourselves also the ground-work for a discussion of the particular question of correspondence between us and the Liberated Churches.

Now, we all know what the term ***correspondence*** means in our everyday life, at least, in a general sort of way. And when the term is applied to the relations between two denominations of churches, it has much the same meaning. Basically the word **correspond** means: "to answer to something else in fitness, in character, in function, in amount, etc." It means "to suit, to agree, to fit, to match". Thus, for example, if in your Young People's Societies you require both your treasurer and assistant treasurer to keep account of your finances, you require, of course, that their accounts correspond, that is, that the balance which your treasurer's account shows should match the balance which the assistant treasurer's account shows. And if the two don't match, you look for an error somewhere along the line. If the figures agree, then, you say there is **correspondence** between the books of the treasurer and the assistant treasurer. Now, perhaps when you hear the term **correspondence**, you immediately think of the exchange of letters between two persons; and that is correct. But behind that exchange of letters lies the state or relation of correspondence, the agreement, the likeness, the match, between the two persons who correspond with one another. If that state or relation of correspondence, of agreement, of likeness, between you and your friend were not there, you would not exchange letters, correspond, with that friend.

Now basically that same idea is at the bottom of the term **correspondence** when it is used with reference to churches. Thus, in a certain sense one might say that there is correspondence between all the various Protestant Reformed Churches. The only thing is that the term is not used in such a case. To describe the relation between our Protestant Reformed congregations we do not speak of correspondence, but we speak of a denomination. We believe that denominational relations are the calling of the church. That denominational unity is imperative mainly for the reason that the church is one, essentially the body of Christ, and that therefore she has the calling to come to manifestation as one to the extent that this is possible. And the basis of that denominational unity may never be anything else than the truth, confessional unity. That confessional unity must be strictly defined and not stretched and broadened with the express purpose of making the church outwardly powerful. The power of the church is always in the truth of the Word of God.

But when it comes to the question of the relation between two or more denominations, the term **correspondence** is used. Basically, therefore, that must mean that there is a state or relation of agreement between two or more denominations of churches. And, carrying over that idea of denominational unity and its basis into the sphere of correspondence between denominations, we must also say

that this state or relation of agreement between two or more denominations must have its basis in the fact that the church is essentially the body of Christ, and that wherever it is, it seeks to come to a unified manifestation. Hence, also that agreement and likeness must not be sought in incidentals, but in likeness in regard to the truth, the confession of the church.

Thus far we have proceeded from the meaning of the term, and have tried to point out how the term applies to the relationship between two or more denominations. We may also note that one looks almost completely in vain for any description or hint of description of the idea of correspondence as such in our Church Order or in our Confessions. There is a hint of the possibility of such a thing as correspondence in an expression of Article 5 of our Church Order. There, in connection with the calling of ministers already in the ministry of the Word, we read of "the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those who have served outside of the Protestant Reformed Churches". And perhaps some ground for the idea of correspondence may be found in Article 85 of the Church Order, which reads: "Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected." Whether from a historical point of view that last article has any bearing on the question of correspondence I am not in a position to say at present. It is true, however, that in the history of the Reformed churches there has actually been such a thing as correspondence between various denominations, either within the same country or between denominations in different countries. Thus, for example, already at the well-known National Synod of the Reformed Church held at Dordrecht in the years 1618-1619 there were present representatives of various church outside the Netherlands. You may find that information at the conclusion of the Canons in our Psalter. And thus, for example, in our times, there is correspondence between the Christian Reformed Church in America and the Reformed Church (Synodical) in the Netherlands.

Now what could it mean that there would be correspondence between our churches and the Liberated Churches. Our Churches have a committee for correspondence with foreign churches appointed by the synod. And our synods and that committee have especially in the past couple years been working on the matter of correspondence with the Liberated Churches. However, as yet just what such correspondence would mean has not been officially declared. That very likely will be a question at our next synod. Our churches have not as yet defined what they mean by correspondence with foreign churches, although we all have a more or less general idea of the implications of correspondence.

In the light of the foregoing, and in the light also of what in some cases correspondence has come to mean, we may say that in theory at least there are the following possibilities as to the meaning of correspondence.

1) It might be that there were two

denominations, let us say one in America and one in the Netherlands, who were completely agreed as to their confessions and who also maintained those confessions exactly in the same way in every respect. In such a case correspondence would be a clear duty, to the extent that our pulpits would be open to their ministers, and vice versa; that the membership papers of their churches would be accepted in our churches by way of transfer, and vice versa; that we would exchange fraternal delegates and of students, etc., and in every way full recognition of one another.

2) It might also be that there are two denominations which stand formaly and officially on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity, but who actually maintain those confessions in opposite ways, or do not actually maintain those confessions, but nevertheless maintain the relation of sister churches. Each then opens its pulpits to ministers of the other, sends representatives to each other's synods, etc., without raising questions as to the differences, often rather essential differences between the churches. Such correspondence becomes a dead letter, and results in the fact that those denominations form together a sort of mutual admiration society, in the meantime often developing great outward power.

3) Correspondence might also take place upon the basis that there are two denominations standing officially upon the basis of the Reformed confessions, but who actually differ with one another as to one or more very important points, while at the same time they have both a sincere desire to be Reformed, to maintain the Reformed truth, and to seek and develop that Reformed truth. In such a case correspondence could not rightly consist in that we in a general sort of way recognize each other as Reformed and even open our pulpits to each other and recognize each other fully. But you could possibly have correspondence in a lively and active way which would begin in this, that the two denominations through their representatives would discuss and enlighten one another with regard to the differences, with their purpose, with such lively, truth-loving, and truth-seeking discussion and enlightenment being to arrive at unified expression and full agreement. The end of such attempts would be the correspondence described under "1". They might thus come to full and real and vital recognition of one another as Reformed Churches.

Thus, briefly, we would attempt to view the question of the meaning of correspondence. And it is upon that background that we would next time, the Lord willing, view the question of the relation between the Liberated Churches and ours. Until next time, then, for I have more than used my space.

H. C. Hoeksema

———o———

ACTION—Inaction. A wrong-doer is often a man who has left **something undone,** not always he who has done something.—(Fraternal Monitor).

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Rev. Gerald Vanden Berg
Oak Lawn, *Illinois*

STEWARDSHIP

In our pre-marital life which in the complex society of our day is so predominantly overtaxed by the energetic striving after selfish interests and pleasures, we may profitably pause momentarily and seriously think about a rather important relationship which we, as Covenant youth, by virtue of our wonderful calling, sustain toward our God.

We refer to the fact that we are **"stewards of God".**

Youth obviously is not always deeply conscious of this. Being carefree from parental duties and family responsibilities, the period of adolescence is frequently wholly given to the seeking and enjoying of what is called a "good time". The justifying excuse is usually propounded that there is still plenty of time to "settle down" later. Recreative amusements receive the lion share of attention. Money is no obstacle, for as the dollar comes so again it goes, flowing like water in abundance. Time is no barrier as our required duties in God's house demand only one or two nights a week and that leaves us plenty of time for diversion. To many a christian parent, the child passing through this stage of life becomes rather problematical.

The question, however, is, what can and must be done about it Shall we embrace the "worldly amusement" problem (?) and lay down line upon line and precept upon precept until we have burdened youth with an intolerable yoke? Or, shall we just sit by and anxiously weep about the sad state of affairs while the world monopolizes the youth and utilizes their colossal powers? Or, is it advisable to only continue fervently in prayer, hoping that some day youth itself will take the initiative toward reformatory practices?

What to do. . . .that's the problem!

Among other things we would suggest that a *good antidote for* the evil of worldliness among the youth is the **incessant emphasis of the God-given duties that befall them as stewards of the Lord!**

A "steward", writes Webster, "is one who is charged with the management of domestic affairs in a large family or on a large estate". This, of course, implies the relationship of a master and a servant. The former, who is lord of the estate, delegates to the latter the authority to care for, to manage and use all that belongs to his estate in the service and interest of the lord and master. To

his lord the servant is responsible and also accountable.

Thus we stand toward our God. He is the Lord and Possessor of all the earth. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. Every beast of the forest is His and the cattle upon a thousand hills." The authority to manage and develop this universal estate of God has been conferred upon man. God is Lord and man is servant. What the latter possesses is loaned to him by the former. To God man is both responsible and accountable.

For us in our adolescence this truth has a far-reaching practical bearing. How about those dollars spent last week on selfish and, perhaps, carnal pleasure! They were not yours. They were loaned to you by God. Did you put them into profitable service where they would further promote His cause and glory?

Consider those evenings last week when you should have been in fellowship with the children of God in the study of His Word and the activity of His Kingdom and you chose to be busy in something else that perhaps completely divorced you from your Master! Whose time were you stealing? It, each second of it, is not yours! It is given you that therewith you may serve the Giver.

Remember youth—"It is required of stewards that they be found faithful." (I Cor. 4:2). We cannot deal with God with impunity although it may seem from the outward appearance of things that we do really get by with a careless and thoughtless life. But we may be sure that our sins will find us out. God will unveil every secret of our heart; He will expose every hidden motive; and manifest every deed we've performed. **It is positively imperative that also in our youth we live as efficient and faithful stewards of our Lord.**

Life is not a plaything. . . it is a serious reality every part of which must be accounted before the face of God!

And then. . . **Christian Living?**

Synonymous with Christian Stewardship! Both are humanly impossible. If we live as perfect christians we would be perfect stewards, but the fact is that in our Christian Living we but scratch the surface and consequently we are miserably poor managers of the Lord's estate. That is why the whole world is in such a chaotic and hopeless mess.

Man sinned and departed from the way of Christian life. He allied himself with Satan and for the premium of death agreed to manage the Lord's estate in the devil's interest. And that is what he has been doing all these years. He takes God's money, industry, creation, natural resources, food, clothing, science, invention and all that is God's and with it he does his very best to promote the cause of Satan.

With that man, you and I, Christians, are allied. That is why it is so much easier (for our flesh) to spend ten dolalrs at an amusement center than to drop one in the offering plate. That is why it is not at all difficult to spend a whole afternoon at the ball-park on a hard bench but complain when the church services run five or ten minutes over the

alloted time. That is why it is more interesting to stay home and bury ourselves in "cheap literary trash" than to **actively** join society and **diligently study** (not read) the Word!

No doubt it is easier to serve the devil than it is to serve God. That is—it is easier for the flesh!

But is it our stewardship?

Do not be so hasty to say that a strict adherence to the requirements of stewardship is impossible, for though it must be conceded that for the flesh this is true, yet, where man fails God provides. God's gift to us consists in part in the power to serve Him aright. Through Jesus and the Spirit given to Him, we receive the stamina of a new life and fortitude against every temptation. "As every man has received the **gift**, even so minister the same one to another, as **good stewards** of the manifold grace of God." (I Peter 4:10).

Yes, that indeed involves us in a battle but then we are soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, are we not, and why then should we shirk from the fighting. Let us go on to perfection. Let us struggle to overcome our evil lusts and put away all greed and envy so that we may be content with what things we have, employing them in the wonderful service of our King. Put away all fleshly desire and seek the Kingdom!

That is Christian Living!

And right Stewardship!

Idealistic thinking?. . . .When we consider ourselves we would think so. When we contemplate the pathetic degeneration of the church-going public we are almost convinced. Isn't it after all only a fancy? This we feel until we see the little Gideon's band fighting valiently and the Daniels maintaining the antithesis regardless of the price. We are then persuaded that by God's grace it is possible to be good stewards.

Youth. . . .a challenge! Be distinctive! Be faithful! Keep your robes pure white! There is a reward in glory for the Christian Steward!

MAY WE REMIND YOU?

SCHUILER

will answer your question on that social problem.

THE QUESTION BOX

needs questions about doctrinal subjects.

THE OPEN FORUM

prints all letters to the Editor which are intended for publication.

Schuiler Writes

We invite all our readers to send in your questions and problems to: SCHUILER, c/o Doorn Printing Co., 705 Eastern Ave., Grand Rapids.

Just after the Christmas season a question was received by this department the gist of which is:

> **"How can Christian people justify themselves in the manner in which they observe Christmas, namely, by means of exchanging material gifts and displaying Christmas trees in their homes."**

A fine letter of information, which also sheds much light on the above-mentioned problem, accompanied the question. The letter was occasioned by the quite general practice in our Christian homes touched upon in the above question. Besides, the question is from parents who themselves condemn such practice and who never have had a Christmas tree in their house, and who very sparingly exchange gifts at the occasion of Christmas, but who also find it very difficult to maintain their position because of the desire of their growing children who observe the general practice in the homes of other Christians. The question of the children is, of course, why can others exchange gifts and have a nice Christmas tree and why not they? After all if a great share of our own church people follow the above mentioned practices there can't be anything wrong with them, can there?

In answering the question I want to state first of all that I can sympathize with the parents who bring up this question and who are dealing here with an actual problem for their own conscience and in their own home.

Furthermore, the accompanying letter is of such a nature that there is enough "food for thought" to make it possible to write two or three articles on this subject. However that is not the purpose of this column and, hence, my reply must be brief and will necessarily be incomplete. It seems to me this is a nice subject to write on for Rev. G. Vanden Berg in his column of "Christian Living". Gladly will I forward the letter to him and he might want to write a few articles on it during the latter part of this year, toward Christmas time. (Naturally, the names of the parties who ask the question will not be divulged).

In the third place, personally I have no scruples about having a Christmas tree in the home. On the other hand I have the greatest respect for those who conscientiously object to such a practice. And I would not call such people "narrow minded", as is often done.

And now a few general remarks. We are dealing here with a problem which is intimately related to the practice of a commercialized, worldly, superficial celebration of Christmas, so general in our day and age. The Christmas story and the Christ-child are virtually buried under Christmas tinsels, packages, trees,

and what have you. The real meaning of Christmas is obscured, camouflaged, denied, and Santa Claus replaces Christ. Besides, the great gift of God is but all too much forgotten and the gifts of man to God (?) or men to each other is emphasized. That's the kind of world we live in. And that world creeps into the Church. And there certainly is great danger that we go along but all too often in copying the world and in becoming worldly-minded, losing our peculiar identity and distinctiveness. Hence: if you ask me: "Can these practices be used in the right manner so that they help us celebrate Christmas in a more spiritual way, fixing our spiritual eye upon the birth of the Saviour?", my answer is: "No, I cannot see how they in any way can contribute toward a more spiritual celebration of Christmas." I can see danger here but no advantages. Still, I have no objection to exchanging gifts or having a Christmas tree in our home. If you can do without it, fine. If we could do away with the practice altogether we would not miss anything essential but we might be saved the temptation of idol worship. But I would leave the question under discussion up to everybody's conscience.

However, I would say this:

1. Let our Christmas celebration be **spiritual.** Remember the great gift of God. (In this connection it might also be well if you read once again the fine article of the Rev. G. Vanden Berg on "Christian Living" in the December, 1949 issue of Beacon Lights). No tree and no gifts is in itself negative. If we are spiritually minded we will emphasize the spiritual aspect of Christmas in our homes, to our children, in our attitude, speech, action, etc. And I am afraid we often fall too much short on this score, also in our homes.

2. As parents we must let our children feel that this entire custom of gift-exchange, christmas trees, etc, has nothing to do with true Christmas celebration. The more excited we parents are about this business of Christmas shopping,—trees,—gifts, etc., the more intensely excited we make our children. They are bad enough already because of the kind of a world they live in, and because of all the hullabaloo they see and hear during the Christmas season.

3. We should insist that our children do not neglect their school work, catechism work, etc., during this time. (This is often the case, and that in itself is a symptom as to how much much the worldly Christmas spirit has hold of them). We as parents have a tremendous responsibility here in emphasizing and living the spiritual things. And, again, I fear that there is much room for improvement here.

4. For the above reasons I would also strongly advise that we never have our gift-exchange on Christmas day. It's the wrong emphasis and the wrong preparation for church service, it has a tendency to mix things that are wholly and totally different.

But, you may say: "Why then have exchange of gifts and why allow Christmas trees at all?" Not to have the above

does not solve the problem because that is negative and because we do not live and cannot live in literal isolation or run away from the actual world in which we live with our children. But it certainly is our calling to lead, direct and guide the thoughts of our children in the proper channels, and we should in every way emphasize the true meaning of Christmas, not that which is incidental and of no essential significance at all. The richest Christmas celebration is there where the Christ is worshipped.

Yes, indeed, it is difficult to teach our children the true meaning of Christmas in the kind of "christian" world in which we live. And it cannot be denied that we but all too often copy the world in its various practices. However, mere negative opposition is no solution to any of our problems. We must maintain our spiritual isolation and our spiritual distinctiveness by living as a spiritually-minded people of the Lord our God.

Much more could be said about this matter, as also about the foolish and wreckless spending by many "christian" people during the Christmas season, but let the above suffice for the time being. And here's hoping that the subject touched upon may receive further attention by other writers in the columns of our magazine.

Thank you for the following encouraging compliment for Beacon Lights: "We wish to say we enjoy Beacon Lights very much and that it brings to its readers much instructive reading."

"How can Christian business men be co-sponsors of a Santa Claus who gives out candy to the kiddies? And if it is wrong for them, isn't it also wrong for us to send our children to Santa Claus to get the candy?"

My reply is: I sometimes wonder myself how Christian business men can be co-sponsors of so many things with other worldly business men. I can see their difficulty and appreciate their position, but whether it is always justifiable is a different question. Perhaps one of our business men would like to give us a little light on this subject and state his point of view.

No, I would not encourage my children to go after the candy Santa Claus has to offer. Although there is nothing wrong with the candy as such, but my point is: the further we can get them away from the Santa Claus idea and all the practices connected with it, the better. All the more so because Santa Claus and Christmas are identified in our country. Give your children a bag of candy and don't encourage them to go to Santa Claus for it. Santa Claus may be a "jolly good fellow" as the world teaches their children, he is rapidly becoming an abominable figure crowding the Christ-child out of the minds and thoughts of our children. The devil tries in many ways to draw out attention and that of our children away from the Christ of Bethlehem. Let us beware of the tactics of the evil one. SCHUILER.

THE COVENANT QUESTION

for after-recess discussion.

Prepared by Rev. L. Doezema

V. THE COVENANT AND BAPTISM:

1. Especially is the question of baptism of importance in connection with the covenant. This is evident when we notice that baptism is the sign of the covenant. All the errors and misunderstandings about the covenant that one has will appear in the treatment of baptism.

We all ought to be informed about the doctrine of baptism. Not merely because it has been a subject of debate, but especially because it is a very practical matter. We all celebrate the sacrament of baptism and some must at some time present their children in baptism, which requires that we do so consciously and intelligently, understanding the doctrine of baptism.

2. It is not our purpose to enter into a discussion of infant baptism, whether we ought to baptize children. We differ with the Baptist churches on that question and it has been settled in all of our minds that we are called upon to baptize our children and it is a blessing of the Lord that He establishes His covenant with us and with our children. Nevertheless, it is profitable to know why we baptize our children. This we ought to consider in connection with the doctrine of baptism at this time.

3. We ought to make a study of the Baptism Form. Although it is very familiar to all of us it would be very profitable for our societies to analyze the form with the question as to what are the doctrinal implications.

a. The form mentions that there are three parts to the doctrine of holy baptism and that the first part is that it points us to our impurity. This is the doctrine of total depravity. And it points us to the need to seek for salvation outside of ourselves.

b. In the second place the Form instructs us that baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins. This is because we are baptized into the name of the triune God. The reasons are then given (you can read them) to show why being baptized into the Name of the triune God witnesseth and sealeth the washing away of our sins. In that connection is found the statement that God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us. Thus the sign of baptism is considered as a sign and seal of God's covenant. The work of the Son and the Holy Spirit also must be considered as the one work of God triune and our salvation. The washing in the blood of the Son and the sanctifying of the Holy Spirit is also the blessing of the covenant which is signified.

c. The third part of the doctrine of baptism points us to our obligation in the covenant.

d. Notice that these parts of the doctrine of baptism are the necessary things which we must know to enjoy the comfort that we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. These parts correspond to the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism as it points out that we must know our sins and miseries and our salvation in Christ,

and how we shall express our gratitude. Notice too that these parts also correspond to the answer of the Heidelberg Catechism's question 81, "For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?" Again notice that these elements of the doctrine of baptism appear in the form for the administration of the Lord's Supper when it states what are the three parts of a true examination of ourselves.

Such an examination of all these points of instruction of our fathers will impress us with the importance of them not only but with their interrelation. If we err on our conception of the doctrines of our salvation as taught us in the catechism we err again in our understanding of the sacraments. The same error which separates the teachings of the catechism, especially teaching or leaving the impression as if in the third part we are concerned with man's work, which man of himself, or the Christian of himself is able to perform appears in some views of baptism and the covenant. It is so evident in some instruction in connection with the Heidelberg Catechism that it is Arminianism all over again. Therefore the vital question for all of us is not whether there is a certain preaching out of the Catechism and a baptism with the form in the present day Reformed churches, but whether it is according to the fundamental principles of the same as derived from the Word of God. In the majority of Reformed churches this same Catechism and form that we use has a place but is corrupted by present day humanism.

4. After such a doctrinal study we are ready to examine some erroneous conceptions in connection with baptism and the covenant.

a. First of all we reject the teaching which says that all that are baptized are saved. This conception derives its error from the teaching about the sacraments itself. (In this connection it would be interesting for a member of the society to report on the teaching and method of the Roman Catholic Church on baptism).

b. There is the problem that arises from the doctrine which says that Baptism is not only a sign but a seal of God's covenant. The question is: if baptism is a seal, that is an assurance or guarantee from God, and if baptism is always valid baptism (the sign and seal always remaining the same for all who receive it),—how can we explain it otherwise than that salvation is for all who receive it?

c. In answer to this problem there is the interpretation that the sign and seal are not always "real". There is the distinction of an outward and an inward baptism. This is not clear, however, whether the sign is distinguished from the spiritual significance or that the sign itself is distinguished into baptism that is real and that which is only appearance. Thereupon it is also explained that from our point of view we must suppose that there is always regeneration in the one who receives the sign of baptism. This then is further made the basis of baptism, that is, that the recipients are considered as God's children, for the purposes of baptism.

Although we can suppose that God usually regenerates His children in their earliest infancy upon the basis of examples in the Scripture, (which are they?), we cannot make this a basis for baptism. For it is the wrong supposition in the first place. We may not suppose that all infants are regenerated when they are not all regenerated. It cannot be a basis for baptism for it is also God's purpose that those who are not His children in the church should bear His sign of baptism, the real baptism which speaks the same language for all those who receive it. For the education of our children we must, to be sure, treat them all as if they were regenerated children of God. We train the man of God and not the man of the world.

(That, however, is more for a discussion on the Covenant and Education).

d. Another answer to the problem raised in point b, is that it is true from God's side that salvation is for all who receive the sign of baptism, all believers and their children. They do not say that there is an operation in the sacrament itself which transmits salvation to all, that for the time being that particular baptized child is saved. This answer which we are considering in d, maintains that all are not saved by the baptism itself, but that God thereby declares His intention to save all. It is their obligation to take it and if they do not they are not saved.

This is evidently not Scriptural and Reformed. We say that Christ assures us (believers) by this sacrament of His salvation for us (believers), of all the covenant blessings which he speaks in His Word. But we cannot say that baptism assures everyone who is baptized that Christ speaks this to him personally. On the basis of Romans 4:11 and the fundamental line of sovereign election preaching in the Bible we can only say that the promise of salvation is assured to every believer that is baptized. To everyone that receives the sign the same language is solemnly spoken, righteousness is by faith. Everyone who receives this baptism and is instructed in it certainly possesses this promise intellectually, just as he possesses the Bible as is pictured in the parable of the pounds. According to the parable of the Sower and Hebrews 6 and the entire Scripture we can also say that many in the church who are reprobate also possess the promise with their emotions. This possession increases their responsibility. And it is the intention of Christ that all should hear and understand the speech of the sign and His Word in that sense of possessing it. However, amazing though it may seem to us, many do not possess the promise by a true and living faith.

e. Another answer seeks to formulate the proposition by emphasizing that the promise is for all. It is denied by some that it is intended for all, for it is explained that the Lord intends to have the promise given with the demand for repentance.

If we would debate with those who maintain the promise is for all, we must recognize their insistence that they define their terms differently. They define that by the promise is meant the promise as it is announced, or as it is addressed, not as its content is eternally determined by the election of God. If it is meant that it is not thought and intended by God as grace to all, that they even receive this "promise", then we can say so far so good.

Our issue should be to show whether in the preaching of the Word and in the administration of baptism the intention of Christ is that the grace of the Gospel is particular, to those whom the Father gave Him. It also should be brought out that even in this administration of the Word and the sacraments there is a twofold effect, also according to the good pleasure of God. After we have made this issue clear it can also be made clear that the terminology "the promise for all", is not language for instruction, and is questionable whether it is scientifically correct. In this way we can avoid the error of condemning someone by our definition.

5. There remains the question, how do infants receive the strengthening of their faith, which the sacraments accomplish according to their intention, since they have no conscious faith?

In answer to this we can say that infants are to be baptized to have them distinguished from the world as also of the church of Jesus Christ. And they receive the blessing through the sacrament when they come to conscious faith.

BIBLE OUTLINE

Rev. John Blankespoor
Grand Rapids, Michigan

LESSON LVI.

"Jesus Is Taken Captive"

(John 18:1-12)

Jesus gives Himself into their hands, vss. 1-9.

John, being an eyewitness of all these events, selects his material in an entirely free manner in accord with his particular plan and purpose in writing this Gospel. Therefore he, at one time, omits some very important incidents that took place at this time, and at another time mentions them. The reason for this is apparent. First of all he will not merely repeat what the Synoptists had written (remember that John wrote many years later) but, secondly, if he does narrate some of them he does so from the viewpoint of Jesus' attestation as the Son of God. This after all is the one purpose of His Gospel narrative.

After Jesus has finished His beautiful farewell (John 14-17), He takes His disciples to the well-known garden og Gethsemane. It was eat of Jerusalem. We are told that He often went thither with the twelve. Gethsemane was a garden of olive trees, hence the word itself means olive-press. And what a press it would be for our Lord! Who does not know a little about His agony in Gethsemane?

Judas, having informed the Jews about the latest developments, and the latter quickly having assembled a motley group, leads them to Jesus. Perhaps they first went to the upper-room, but not finding Him there wend their way to Gethsemane, His common place of retreat. The group that follows Him is called a band. It certainly reminds us of our modern-day mobs. Among them is no order. Their weapons are swords and sticks, whatever they could lay hold of in so short a time. There was nothing official about the whole movement. And notice its constituents! Soldiers, perhaps to create a sense of greater fear; chief priests, scribes, captains of the temple and elders. Imagine, the leaders of the "church" (who should be expecting the Saviour and live in that hope) form such a mob to lay hold of the Lord of glory. Notice also that it was a great multitude. First of all, they wanted to be sure to be able to capture Him, being acquainted with His frequent displays of power. But they must also have good protection in the midst of the large numbers of pilgrims that have come to Jerusalem.

Judas must lead them to Jesus. Undoubtedly there is also bitter satire in their actions, one of Jesus' followers leading them in His capture. Approaching Jesus, Judas quickly stepped for-

word to give Jesus the promised kiss. Thereupon he very likely quickly stepped back to let them "close in" on Him. But then Jesus steps forward. "Whom seek ye?" What a question! Is this the same One who only a few moments ago crawled like a worm in the dust, mingling in His agony, His bloody sweat with the dust of the earth? Indeed, He is! Now He is prepared to go. "Whom seek ye?" Naturally this is not ignorance on the part of Jesus. He will expose their actions as utterly ridiculous. Are they seeking some criminal or dangerous evildoer, with all these weapons? Notice also how they answer Him: "Jesus of Nazareth". To them He is just Jesus of Nazareth, no more. And as soon as Jesus identifies Himself they fall back, which means, not merely that they retreated, but fell down like dead ones. Christ for a moment shows them His divine power. Of course, the purpose of this repeated action is that they will be convinced first of all that He is the very Son of God (John's purpose of writing the Gospel) but also that they will never take Him if He refuses. No one must ever be able to say that they finally succeeded in laying hold of Him. No, they must all admit that He gave Himself into their hands. How hard unbelief is, for, wouldn't we expect these people either to almost wilt, or flee away? But nothing of the kind; they now will lay their hands on Him.

Questions: Why was the sign of the kiss so devilish? How do you explain the last part of vss. 8 and 9?

Jesus Refuses all Defence, vss. 10-12.

As the band approaches and takes hold of Jesus the disciples are ready. They will come to Jesus' defence, possessing two swords. Perhaps they have so interpreted Jesus' words of Luke 22:36. First they ask the question: "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" But Peter cannot wait. He will split the head of Malchus in two? However, only an ear falls off. Immediately it is healed.

And Jesus again shows the disciples why He goes this way. Shall He not drink the cup the Lord has given Him? Jesus' suffering is compared here with the drinking of a bitter potion. The Father has now placed this cup to His lips. And now refuse to drink from it? Never, for the will of the Father is His will. Therefore it is not a question of physical power, of swords or of legions of angels, but of voluntarily doing the will of His Father. He must go the way of obedience to fulfill all righteousness. Giving Himself unto them He begins to drink of the cup. To make the matter secure He is bound. And the disciples flee, as we are told by the other Gospel writers.

Questions: What mental picture do we get of the power of twelve legions of angels if one angel can slay 185,000 Assyrians in one night? Can we say that the disciple, in fleeing, are cowards, after all? Show how Jesus manifested His love for His own in these actions.

* * * * *

LESSON LVII

"Peter Denies Jesus"

(John 18:13-27)

Jesus before Annas, vss. 13, 14, 19-23.

From John we learn that the trial during the night was preceded by a judicial examination under Annas. Why this was done is difficult to say. We can only guess that this preliminary hearing was invented in the spur of the moment, to mark time and afford the Sanhedrin to assemble at this time of the night. The legal restrictions forbidding trials at night unscrupulously set aside.

Why John writes only about the trial before Annas and not about the one before Caiaphas is difficult to say. We do believe, however, that the element John wishes to emphasize is the denial of Peter, which he discusses rather elaborately. Notice also that the account of the trial before Annas is sandwiched between the account of Peter's denial. It is very well possible that all that takes place before Annas as written here must be explained in the light of this denial. Therefore we will first take notice, briefly, of this preliminary trial.

Annas undoubtedly utilizes his time to elicit from Jesus some dawning testimony which may be of help to his son-in-law. Hence, the question concerning Jesus' disciples and doctrine. Annas acts as thought he did not know what Jesus taught, and as though he had not deemed it worth while hitherto to acquaint himself with the teachings of this man. It is understood that what He did teach is heretical. And heretics must, according to the Mosaic law, be killed. And now these ungodly men will determine whether Jesus is a heretic or not. Jesus' answer is short and to the point. Ask the public. Never did He say anything in secret. Hence the pertinent question: "Why dost thou question me?" Jesus lays His finger on the evil motive of Annas, who is seeking to lay hold of something that Jesus may now say in order to misuse this against Him. Annas is "on the spot". But one of his servants is quick to realize the situation, and gives Jesus a violent blow in the face. Receiving no rebuke, since this was contrary to law, he evidently pleases his superior. Jesus answers His attacker with perfect calm and exposes his business. Let him give the real reason and not hide it.

The Denial, vss. 15-18, 24-27.

Peter must have witnessed these things, at least to a certain extent. That was the very purpose of his being here. But it was also the occasion for his great fall.

The History. It is rather difficult to gather from the Gospel writers what the exact procedure was. John really speaks of only two denials. We consider it to have happened something like this. John first of all was well aquainted in this place, some commentators even think that he was a relative of the high priest. The building into which they had entered was very likely a large rectangular structure surrounding an open court, with rooms perhaps on each side. Most probably that there was a large hallway around the court from which people could enter the various rooms. John, now,

follows the crowd into the open court where there is a fire. Peter, however, at first remains behind; he is let in after John spoke to the doormaid. But it is this doormaid who occasions his first denial. From Matthew we get the impression that Peter soon after this again tried to leave the court, and passing through the covered entry that led from the court to the street outside is again charged with being a disciple of Jesus, this time by two maids and a man. This may have driven Peter back into the court, and he joins the group that is standing around the fire. Some time elapses, during all this time Jesus being tried. But then Peter is brought into straits. He is recognized by his speech, and one of the men recalls seeing him in the garden. Consequently a number of men confront him. With this circumstantial evidence the net is drawn tight around him. He resorts to oaths and cursings. He must do something. Jesus he does not know, and never did know. One lie compels others until the liar is submerged.

Its Significance. For Peter it means that he calls God to be a witness that he does not know Jesus and never has had anything to do with Him. And if he is lying, let God condemn him to hell. Such are the implications of an oath. Peter, in other words, also severs all contact with Jesus. Therefore he later had to be restored as a disciple.

For Jesus all this spelled tremendous suffering, for He undoubtedly was aware of what was going on. While He is seeking to establish perfect fellowship with God's people, they (Peter) are breaking it down. The Head is come to reconcile the body to God, but while He does so the body breaks to pieces. Jesus had instructed His disciples that in the kingdom of heaven oaths have no place, but here Peter casts all His words to the wind. The fundamental element of truth, taught in these words, Peter discards. In few words Peter here throws to the wind Christ and everything for which He stands. Is this the rock?

Its Reason. But why? Was Peter really a coward after all? No, but such a Jesus he cannot believe in. Peter is offended. Can that Jesus be his Saviour, who gives Himself to be bound, and permits Himself to be beaten unjustly? Is He the expected Messiah? No, this cannot be. And Peter falls before humble slaves, doormaids.

Bitter Weeping. But Jesus never forsakes His own, even while the waves and billows reach His own lips. Just as He is being led from Annas to Caiaphas, Peter is denying Him. No, He cannot stop to talk to Peter; His hands are tied; He can give only one glance. This He does, not in anger, but in penetrating love. And Peter catches this glance. At the same time the cock crows for the second time. And Peter goes out, weeping bitterly (loudly).

Questions: Which one thought overwhelms us when we read and study these words? How do people deny Jesus today? Was Peter's sin in reality much worse than Judas'? Why was Peter saved and not Judas?

LESSON LVIII

"Jesus' Trial Before Pilate"

(John 18:28-40)

The Request of the Jews, vss. 28-32.

John does not mention the details of the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin has, however, condemned Him to death on the ground of His testimony of being the Son of God. Isn't it striking that the basis and possibility of all His work (being the Son of God) is also the ground on which He is condemned. But the Romans only can execute the death sentence; therefore they must now have the permission of Pilate. Hence, they take Jesus to the hall of judgment (praetorium). It is early in the morning. A great procession arrives with Jesus. They halt before the hall, lest they be defiled by entering a Gentile abode, and be barred from eating the Passover. "Here we see men openly bent on no less a crime than judicial murder yet stickling about a human tradition devoid of divine sanction. They swallow camels but strain at gnats." (Lenski)

Since the Roman court proceedings were conducted in the most public manner, even on the street or in a market place, Pilate now opens court in front of this judgment hall. He naturally assumes that the Sanhedrin, having condemned Jesus, comes with weighty charges. But notice how they answer him, vss. 30. They certainly try to present Jesus as a most terrible criminal. Why question them anymore? All Pilate has to do is sign the Jewish verdict and give the order of immediate execution. If only they could succeed in this, for they dared not reveal the facts to Pilate, for he would at once turn them away from his tribunal. The Romans would never entertain a religious charge that lay outside of Roman law and pertained only to religious notions of a subject nation.

But Pilate is not deceived. He is aware of their craftiness, and therefore acts as though he thinks they have not yet tried Jesus. "Judge Him according to your own law." Now they must reveal their purpose in coming to the governor. Jesus **must** be put to death, and Pilate alone has this power. From this it becomes plain to Pilate that they are concerned only in Jesus' execution, and that they are delivering Him up only for that purpose.

In vs. 32 John tells us that this naturally all took place according to the Scriptures. Jesus must not be stoned, or killed in some other way. He must die the accursed death on the cross. This is the God appointed way, but also the demand of the law. And whereas only the Romans can crucify, it is to fulfill Scripture and Jesus' own words that He is brought to the Roman governor.

Questions: Do you think it often is true of the apostate church that she externally strictly keeps the law, but transgresses the spirit of it a thousandfold? Can you give other examples? Does hatred for Jesus and the cause of God cause men to discard all justice and equity? Is this always true?

The Trial, vss. 33-40.

Pilate now takes up the case and proceeds with the trial. And the Jews come with their false charges. They are: 1. that Jesus by His activity has perverted the Jewish nation; 2. that He has forbidden to pay taxes to Caesar; 3. that He has been proclaiming Himself as the King of the Jewish nation. Every word is, of course, a deliberate lie. "Those who seek a criminal end are ready to use the necessary criminal means". (Lenski)

Notice how they pervert the whole idea of Jesus' kingship, presenting it as one of this life in the realm of the natural, intentionally concealing the idea of the spiritual which certainly must have become plain to them intellectually. Consequently Pilate approaches Jesus from this point. "Art thou king of the Jews?"

Thereupon Jesus asks a question stated in vs. 34; He will have Pilate clearly understand and realize that this reference to "The King of the Jews" only echoes the charge of the Jews and that it really did not originate with him. Notice how Pilate retorts: "Am I a Jew?" How would he know anything about this whole case and about Jesus? Then in vs. 36 Jesus answers him regarding His kingship, clearly showing that His kingdom is of a spiritual, ethical nature, and not of this world. Pilate certainly must not place Him in the category of secular kings. "Art thou a king", Pilate immediately asks. This is a surprise to him, for in his mind kings must always be associated with power, and glory and majesty. Jesus standing bound before him certainly does not look like one. But is Jesus a king then in some sense? Thereupon Jesus states fully and clearly what kind of king He is. He is one who bears witness of the truth. As king He brings the Word of God, and rules by it. Notice how His office of prophet and king are closely related here. This is too much for Pilate. "What is truth?" Some believe that this was mockery on his part. I rather believe that it manifested his total indifference towards the whole matter. Faith would ask more questions, but Pilate turns away, refusing to delve into such subjects.

Naturally, Pilate has found no fault in Him. But now He begins to show his cowardice and fear, fear for the Jews and fear for Jesus on the other hand. If he had not feared the former he would have acquitted Jesus right then and even given Him protection. Yet he also fears to condemn Jesus. Undoubtedly he had heard of Jesus' words and works, and he must also have been deeply impressed by Jesus' tranquil and majestic testimony of Jesus. Later the dream of his wife aggravated the situation. Now he will therefore make a proposal which will certainly mean the release of Jesus. It being customary to release a prisoner on the Passover Pilate presents the nomination of Jesus and Barrabus. What an injustice! All the more so in the light of the last verse.

Questions: How did Pilate already condemn Jesus with this act? What does Matt. 27:20 say about this matter? How can it be explained that there apparently was not even a small minority opposing such a choice?

LESSON LIX.
"Jesus Before Pilate", continued
(John 19:1-16)

The Soldiers and Jesus, vss. 1-5.

After Pilate's failure at his previous attempt to release Jesus, he will make another try. He gives Jesus to be scourged, and even lets his soldiers stage a mockery of this King of the Jews. Possibly the Jews will then turn away from this wretched figure, a man who is too helpless and too ridiculous to give another thought to.

Scourging was a terrible ordeal. Stripped of clothes, the body was bent forward, the hands being tied, the back stretched and so exposed to the blows. The Jews used rods, but the Romans used short-handled whips, each provided with several leather lashes, with pieces of lead or bone fastened to the end of each lash. The strokes were laid on with full force. The effect was horrible; often the skin and the flesh of the back were gashed to the very bone, and bloddy holes were torn in the body, sometimes exposing the bones and the very inner organs of the body. So they treated Jesus, and do not fail to notice that He submits Himself to this without a murmer. In all this He was bearing the wrath of God.

The scourging has hardly been ended when the mockery begins. A crown of thorn-bearing twigs was pressed on His head, and a purple robe (possibly and old and faded one) which was royal clothing, was put on Him. All the soldiers must see Him. How they mock Him! Each one greets Jesus with: "Hail King of the Jews!" Simultaneously they beat the thorns into His head with the reed, and give Him blows in the face. Then Pilate brought Him out before the Jews. What a spectacle ! He means to say that the whole thing is a joke, let them see for themselves; hoping that they now will be satisfied. But at the same time the soldiers have been tried by Jesus, having shown what their attitude is towards the suffering servant of the Lord. And Pilate reveals himself to be a coward. Since when must the judge obtain the consent of the accuser to the verdict he has found? Does a righteous judge ever consider his own finding non-final until the accuser gives the approval? Does the accuser ever have the power to alter the verdict of the judge when it does not please him? And the Romans were considered to have the best and most righteous form of government! But look what even the "best" do with the Son of God!

Pilate Afraid of Jesus, vss. 6-12.

The spectacle, instead of calming their bitterness, goads them on. Listen to their shouts demanding crucifixion. Pilate retorts with irony: You crucify Him, knowing that they could not do so according to their law. This implies that Pilate, who can do so, does not find Him guilty of such punishment. Still, he does not release Him for fear of the Jews. What a coward!

Well, if Pilate can find no guilt in Him according to his law, they can, according to their law, for He makes Himself the Son of God. This made Pilate afraid. Hence, for the Jews it has the very oppo-

site effect. Not that Pilate knew God, but he did believe in pagan gods or demi-gods, and possibly thought that Jesus was one of them. Therefore he surely must do some more investigating. Hence, the one question: "Who art Thou?" But Jesus is silent, having already testified of Himself. Notice how Jesus at this point easily could have freed Himself by showing that He was the Son of God. But no, He will go the way of suffering. But when Jesus did speak each word weighed tons. The power that Pilate has is of God, which implies that he in himself is weak, but also must be very careful. However, those who delivered Jesus into his hands are even more guilty. Now Pilate is determined (for the first time) to release Jesus. To the believers witnessing the trial it must have given hope. But no, now the Jews come with a final diabolic, cunning thrust. If Pilate fails to crucify Jesus he will no longer be Caesar's friend, i.e., not loyal to him, but an enemy of him. The Jews would see to it that Caesar would hear how Pilate released a man who claimed to be king instead of Caesar. And woe unto him who speaks or acts against Caesar. Pilate is crushed.

What lies and hypocrisy on the part of the Jews! And what a weak governor! Don't fail to notice several things here. First of all that the Jews have always refused to have Jesus for their king. So it was in the days of Moses, Samuel, David, Rehoboam, etc. Secondly, here we have man's manifestation of evil and deviltry before the righteous God. Thirdly, that through this way the Son of God is condemned and crucified and able to make atonement for the sins of His people.

Questions: How can we say that not Jesus, but Pilate, the soldiers and the Jews were on trial? What was Pilate's one concern?

Pilate's Verdict, vss. 13-16.

Pilate is seated for the final judicial act. John tells us about the time, it being the passover preparation. Wonder why the Holy Spirit wants us to know this? Can it be that through this act of the Jews and Pilate the real Passover was being prepared?

The Roman governor will still scorn them even though his mind is made up as to the verdict. He has no choice, so he thinks. "Behold, your king!" An insult is hurled into their faces. At the same time Jesus willingly is presented to them as such. Pilate is too weak for courageous mastery, but he is strong in verbal thrusts. But again: "Away with Him, crucify Him!" Nothing else will do, God must be killed. Unrighteousness will extinguish the Righteous One. Man has no room for God "They received Him not". And the high priests, the representatives of the "church" cry out that they have no king but Caesar, implying that this Jesus is not their king. Pilate gives the verdict, and washes his hands, the coward and hypocrite, but certainly could not remove the stain of guilt. His name is covered with infamy to this day. We are told that in the year 36 he was deposed, sent to Rome to face charges, and then seems to have been banished and to have committed suicide.

OPEN FORUM

OUR READERS "WRITE" . . . . OR "WRONG"

Dear Editor,

AMUSEMENTS

This is a popular subject today in many of our Reformed publications. Are we as Protestant Reformed youth entitled to amusements? It has been the stand of some that we should be denied all the joys of life. I do not agree. This was characteristic of the Puritans who went so far as to fear a characteristic dress and were not supposed to laugh.

We are entitled to amusements. The word of God does not condemn but rather presupposes the enjoyments of life. In Zachariah 8:5 we read, "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." And in Ecclesiastes 11:9 we read, "Rejoice, O 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." We as young people need relaxation, for a bow long bent at last waxeth weak. It is my opinion that the refusal of all the joys of life would result in some turning their backs on Christianity.

I think the main question should be the choice of our amusements. In the first place we should choose amusements that relax the body and mind. This may be in playing ball, horseback riding, ice-skating, swimming, reading, or by playing games such as checkers and chess. We must understand we should never take part in degrading pleasures such as the movie, the dance, or by drinking and all other forms of immorality.

Our lives should never be dominated by the amusements we take part in either. There is a danger of this in even the simplest of games.

Finally, we must realize that the purpose of our life is not to be amused, but to glorify God. In some ways our amusements can lead to this end. By acting according to the principles of the church we can be an example to others. Our amusements should give us the necessary relaxation, fit us better for life's work, and heighten the enjoyment of life. We can well apply the words that were on the bulletin a few Sundays ago,

> What is right may I pursue,
> What is wrong, refuse to do,
> What is evil seek to shun,
> This I ask through Christ Thy Son.

Herman Kelderman
Oskaloosa, Iowa

———o———

Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

CURRENT COMMENTS

REV. L. DOEZEMA
Bellflower, Calif.

Disturbing News

Several items in the newspaper today could be called very disturbing to one who has been building dreams of a better world and greater security.

One is the decision to build the hydrogen bomb. There can be no question about it that it must be built. In the present race for power no nation such as ours can be without such "security". However, the fact that it must be made is most disturbing. The consequences also must be faced.

Another item in this connection is the statement, "Dr. Harold C. Urey, discoverer of heavy hydrogen, urged Congress today to invite the Atlantic democracies to form a federal union "immediately" or risk the loss of their support".

Still another very disturbing item in this same connection is the arrest of Dr. Klaus Fuchs, as a Russian spy in London. This scientist working on the atomic project in this country and Canada had access to all the data about the bomb. Drew Pierson writes today that Fuchs also knew about the H-bomb, which our scientists tried to produce before they got the A-bomb. The British believe, writes Pearson, he gave everything to the Russians.

All this points to destruction of the world, both the physical world and the inhabitants thereof. This destruction of the world is of course not something arbitrary, of blind fate that neither God nor man can prevent. We know that man cannot prevent it because he will not walk in the way of righteousness. But the living God can if we will. But He has declared in His Word what is acceptable to Him, that is, "Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another." (Zach. 11:9).

It may seem that this is the element in Scripture which makes missionary zeal and endeavor impossible. For that reason it is ignored and the "other element" as for example II Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."—this text is quoted with the emphasis (as one missionary heads his article 'not willing that any should perish') that we should have the universal offer of salvation although not universal atonement.

We must preach the everlasting Gospel that God will have all the weary and heavy laden come to Him and that He

is not willing that any of those who are such should not come to Him. All that come to Him He will in no wise cast out.

The text of Peter should be read as it stands in the Bible and not the paraphrase as men give it. Men often just quote a part of the Bible and lose the eternal import and comfort of it. First we must read that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, ...but is long-suffering to usward. This demands the answer to the question, what is the promise? The promise is salvation for all that believe. Then the text emphasizes to "usward". That means all of us believers. The expression in the following phrase, "not willing that any should perish" definitely therefore can only refer to the same "usward", the believers.

This does not diminish our missionary zeal. We believe that we should preach the particular gospel to everyone. And we believe that the Lord will cause to come to Him all that the Father gave Him. That gives us the inspiration and comfort in all our work as it also gave the comfort to Jesus in His ministry.

NATURE STUDY

Mr. C. De Boer — Kalamazoo, Mich.

Truffles

During the winter months in Southwestern Europe it is not uncommon to see individuals strolling through the oak and beech woodlands with a dog or a pig on a leash. No, the leashed animal is not dejected but it is carefully sniffing the ground as it proceeds. The aged master does not ignore its action but watches it intently. Suddenly, the pig comes to a halt and after a few pronounced sniffs, commences to burrow into the ground. Soon the master sets his basket on the ground, unstraps the fork from his back, withdraws the pig, and begins to dig. Only a few inches down he discovers his treasure which he extricates with care and then continues to follow his leashed guide.

Again the animal's pace is slackened as he nears a small semi-barren area under a large oak tree. The ground is raised and cracked. With difficulty the owner restrains the animals from digging. Another loot is soon uncovered just beneath the surface of the ground. With eager hands and radiant face the aged hunter fills his basket. On this occasion his search has been richly rewarded and of short duration, so he restraps his digging instrument, picks up his basket and leads his pig homeward where he rewards the creature with a generous serving of food. After having fed the pig he starts off to market with his basket of truffles.

Truffles? . . . . What are Truffles? They are small non-green plants closely related to mushrooms and resemble small

potatoes with warty, scabby peelings. They usually range in size from a walnut to a medium sized potato. They are found in clusters just as potatoes, only they never possess any foliage or roots. The exterior varies from a brown to a black while the fleshy interior is a marbleized greyish black. Although the truffle is a plant, it is very meaty in character. Several species are edible, but the most famous is the variety Perigord (found in the Province of Perigord, France) which has an unusually delicate aroma and is prized for garnishes and dressings. As much as 2,000 pounds are exported annually to the United States alone. After grading for size and quality, utmost care is taken in packaging them to preserve their delicate aroma.

In the days when Greece and Rome were in their glory, truffles were recognized as a delicacy. Their origin was a subject of much debate since they had neither roots nor foliage. In 300 B.C. Theophrastus indicated that the current belief was that they were produced by thunder. Until the turn of the present century the origin of truffles was as much of a problem as in the days of the ancients. All attempts at cultivation proved futile — possibly the ancients were correct.

The spores or seeds of mushrooms can be grown, but the spores of the truffle never mature and ripen within it.

Observers noticed small yellow flies hovering above the ground where truffles were located. Careful study revealed that these insects borrowed their way into the ground, attracted by the aroma of the plant, and feasted on its contents. Later, as they returned from their subterranean feast they carried particles of the plant with them to the leaves of the surrounding trees. Here, on the leaves of the oak and the beech trees the spores ripened. With the coming of autumn they began germinating only to drop back to the earth with the falling leaves. The warm autumnal rains provided the proper conditions for these germinating spores to grow and they instinctively turned downward into the soil where they absorbed sufficient moisture and nutrients to develop into mature truffles.

Up to the present man has never been able to grow truffles commercially. Isn't it truly marvelous how interrelated and dependent the truffle is upon the insect to propagate it and man, in turn, upon an animal to scent it out?.

GIFTS

We gratefully acknowledge the following:

Gifts For Beacon Lights

Singspiration (4th Church)	
Collection (Hope Church)	31.49
Y. P. Society (Hull, Iowa)	15.00

Send your gift to Miss Thelma Jonker, 1210 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6.

TRUTH *vs. Error*

Rev. J. Howerzyl
Oskaloosa, Iowa

Our Creeds

Last time, in writing on "The Authority of the Creeds" we attempted to point out that creeds receive their authority and have authority in the first place because they are the expression of the Truth of Scripture. Then they have value and authority for us because they express the faith of the church of the past of which we are the present members. Finally and for us very important, they are not simply dead statements of the past but if they are to be real creeds they must express the living confession of the church and of each of its members. This means that what is contained in our creeds is not only the church's confession but our own personal confession of the truth of God's Word.

If once this is seen, then it is also evident that an ignorance of the creeds or of their content is impossible. Impossible that is for one who is a vital, wide-awake child of God. For how can I take part in the confession of the truth which my church makes if I do not know what that truth is? This is impossible.

Now, it is not our purpose at this time to present a study of our creeds, although this might be done and would surely be of profit to us as young people. If my memory doesn't fail me this was started at one time and a beginning was made in the treatment of the Canons of Dordt, using the questions supplied by Rev. Hoeksema. It might be well to do something along this line again. But our purpose now is rather, simply to present the general picture of our Three Forms of Unity as they form the creedal basis of our Churches.

The oldest of our creeds, although less than a year separates the two older ones, is The Belgic or Netherlands Confession. It was composed in 1561 by Guido de Bres with the help of others. In order to understand it better we will look for a moment at the circumstances which brought it forth.

Guido de Bres was a minister of the Reformed faith in Belgium and northern France. In both these places the Reformed faith was illegal. In France barred by the king, in Belgium, then combined with Netherlands into one country, barred by order of the King of Spain, Phillip II, who was also ruler of the low countries. There already he had begun his butchery of Christians which was to lead to the terrible blood-letting under Alva of which the following has been said, "Grotius estimates the number of Protestant martyrs in Holland, under one reign, at one hundred thousand. Gibbon confidently asserts that 'the number of Protestants who were executed by the Spaniards in a single province and a single reign, far exceeded that of the primitive martyrs in the space of three centuries, and of the Roman empire." It was during the beginning of

the reign of this tyrant that Guido de Bres drew up the document which was to be known as the Belgic or Netherlands Confession.

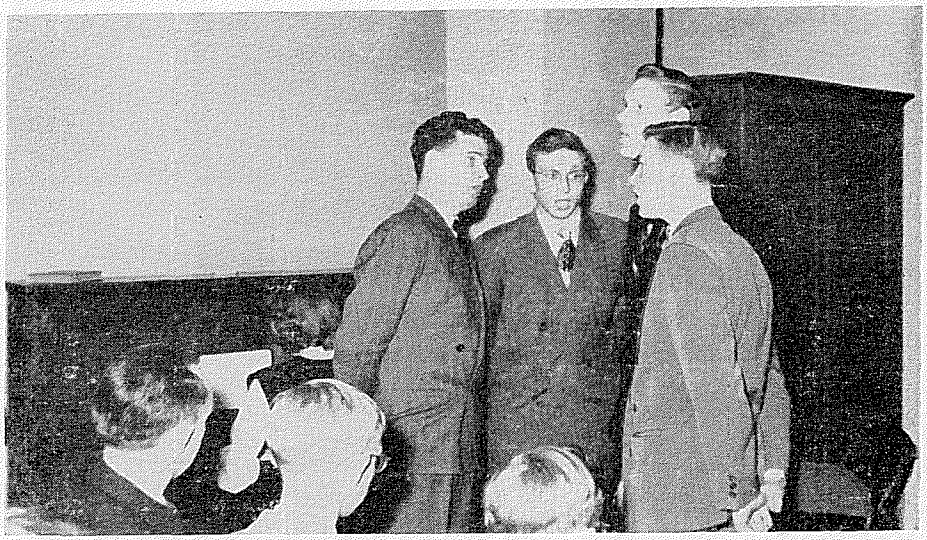
He had already at this time tasted what it meant to suffer for his faith. Already he had been chased from place to place, his congregation scattered, and he, subject to arrest at any moment, had gone to England, where he could preach and teach in safety but had returned, placing his life in jeopardy for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. While in this latter situation ministering to various congregations in Belgium and northern France, he composed the Confession, not with the idea that it would serve as a creed, but with a view to acquainting Phillip II with the stand and confession of the Reformed Christians in order that he, seeing that they were not fanatics, might deal with them more tolerantly. As might be expected from one like Phillip II, this confession rather than softening his heart spurred him on to greater and more severe measures against the converts from Roman Catholicism. In 1567 de Bres was arrested and hanged for his faith.

Even though the Confession had not been written with a view to being a creed, being rather a private and personal confession of de Bres first of all, and then also of that faith which he had in common with others of similar faith, yet it was soon accepted as a common confession by all those of Reformed faith in the low countries. That it was not meant as a creed for the church but had as its purpose the acquaintance of Phillip II with their faith is beautifully expressed in the address which precedes the Confession, "They protest against the charge of being rebels, and declare that notwithstanding they number more than a hundred thousand, and are exposed to the most cruel oppression, they obey the government in all lawful things; but that rather than deny Christ before men they would 'offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to the fire, well knowing that those who follow Christ must take his cross and deny themselves'."

This Confession was publicly adopted by a Synod in Antwerp in 1566, then in Wesel in 1568, more formally by a Synod at Emden in 1571, by a Synod of Dort in 1574, another at Middelburg in 1581 and again by the great Synod of Dort on April 29, 1619. But because at this Synod there was a clamor for change and because the text had become confused the Synod carefully revised the text and it is this form, adopted by the Synod of Dort in 1619, and translated into English that we acknowledge as one of our creeds today.

Turn, then, once again, to the Belgic Confession, read it, study it, love it, and remember that the truth of it was sealed and confirmed by the faith of the church since that time. That each word was, as it were, printed in the blood of those who died rather than relinquish the faith which was expressed in it; and then as you read it, thank God for that "faith of our fathers" and pray and work that it may "continue still".

January Mass Meeting . . . Grand Rapids



THE QUARTET:—Ed Ophoff, Chuck Westra, Herm Hanko, and Jim Kok.

REV. B. KOK

The periodical Mass Meeting of the young people's societies in and around Grand Rapids got off to a good start with community singing led by Mr. Al Heemstra, after which Rev. De Wolf had read Psalm 147 and opened with prayer.

In place of the usual Bible discussion, Rev. Kok answered a question concerning the interpretation of I Timothy 4:10. As we all know, Rev. Kok is well qualified to answer such a question because he is in charge of the "Question Box" in B. L.

Tony Vanden Berg and Herm Hanko spoke on the subject, "Do we or do we not advocate dramatization of historical and fictional events for the purpose of education." Tony answered all the questions which had been raised previously against drama. Herm stressed the point that actors must feel the emotion of the character which they are portraying, and

therefore assume the sin of that person.

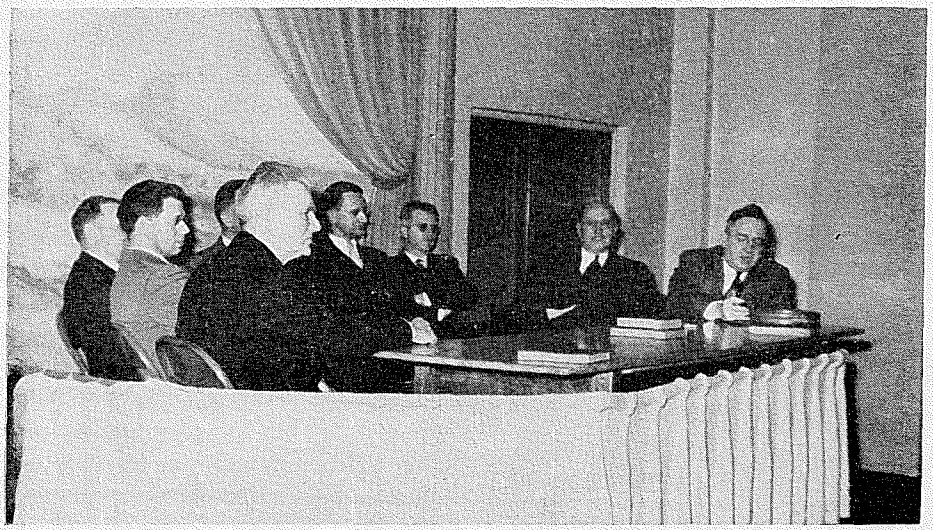
Because the time passed so quickly, there was no discussion after these speeches, but the whole group lined up for lunch. Many thanks to the ladies of First Church for the excellent snack! After we had eaten our fill of ham sandwiches and milk, we heard a medley of hymns from the Hawaiian Ensemble.

The Surprise Packet, the feature of the evening, consisted of many of the ministers in and around Grand Rapids whose combined ages totaled nearly three hundred years. The question presented to these men was: "How would we face the issues of today if we were nineteen years old". The panel threw much light on this subject, but, because their time was limited, they felt that they should tell us more at another meeting.

The quartet of the host church sang a few numbers for us. The Hawaiian Ensemble again played for us. Rev. Hanko closed the meeting with prayer.

Dwight J. Monsma, Reporter.

HERM and TONY



THE SURPRISE PACKET:—Revs. H. Hoeksema, J. A. Heys, J. De Jong, J. Blankespoor, C. Hanko, H. De Wolf, B. Kok, and R. Veldman.

FREEMASONRY . . . An Anti-christian Religion

Seymour Beiboer

Instalment II.

No one can deny that the Masons claim to be religious. They talk about immorality, resurrection and heaven; it calls on the Name of the Lord in its meetings and on its funerals. They also talk of God as the Supreme Architect of the Universe. Their meeting place is called a temple. They also have their chaplains, priests, deacons, and Worshipful Masters. Bibles are used extensively and many passages of Scripture are quoted (frequently intentionally misquoted) in their rituals.

That Masonry is not the Christian religion can be easily proved by the lodge itself. The Encyclopedia of Freemasonry is the best wellknown authority on Freemasonry, written by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, Past General High Priest and Secretary General of the Supreme Council, 33rd for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States. It is said that Dr. Mackey spent more than ten years in preparing this book in which there is an article entitled "Religion", which is found on page 619, which I quote:

"The religion of Masonry is not sectarian. It admits men of every creed within its hospitable bosom, rejecting none and opposing none for his peculiar faith. It is not Judaism, though there is nothing in it to offend a Jew; it is not Christianity, but there is nothing in it repugnant to the faith of a Christian. Its religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation—handed down to us from some ancient and patriarchal priesthood—in which all men may agree and none may differ".

Again from this same book I quote:

"Hutchinson and Olives, I am constrained to believe, have fallen into great error in calling the Master Mason's degree a Christian Institution. If Masonry were simply a Christian institution, the Brahmin, the Moslem, and the Buddist could not conscientiously partake of its illumination, but its universality is its boast; in its language citizens of every nation may converse; at its alters all religion may kneel; and to its creed every faith may subscribe."

From this one can readily see that Masonry is certainly not the Christian religion as based on the Holy Scriptures. It has "nothing in it to offend the Jews", therefore Jesus Christ is left out. How can there be "nothing in it" to offend the conscientious Christian when the only Name under Heaven in which we can be saved is deliberately omitted from their prayers and from Holy Writ. The religion of Masonry is the strangest conglomeration of all the religions of the world. One only has to believe in a Supreme Being which may include pagan idols, sun worship, worship of self or anything else. Any so-called religious book can be used in their services. The Mohammedan Koran is considered a "light" to Masonry as well as the Bible and the Hindu Vedas. Certainly their religion is definitely ANTI Christian and is a type of the "Beast" of Revelation 13.

Masonry plays around with the Holy Scriptures as if it were a mere toy. They add to or subtract from it in order to suite their own fancies. For instance, in the charge to be read at the opening of the lodge, II Thess. 3:6 is quoted by the lodge like this, "Now we command you, brethren, that we withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us." Other passages from the Epistles are quoted likewise. It is also mentioned in a footnote that this is taken from the above mentioned text with slight, but necessary modifications. So it is a slight modification to deliberately omit the name of Christ from Scripture. Just listen to what the Apostle John has to say about this in Rev. 22:19. "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of Life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book."

Masonry makes misuse of holy things by ascribing names that belong only to the persons of the Holy Trinity to pagan, sinful men. Names such as Worshipful Master, Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret, and Illustrious Most High Prophet and Priest, etc. This is certainly a gross violation of the third commandment.

How then does Masonry claim to show the way to Eternal Life? The "just reward of a pious and virtuous life" is all that Masonry answers. Of course in the Masonic sense, without Christ and His atoning blood, only by obeying the Masonic commandments; that is by keeping partiality to fellow lodge members above everybody else. This is the only comfort a Mason has in life and in death. In other words, salvation by character which is the same as modernism and Pharisaism. In fact history tells us that Freemasonry is the mother of modernism.

Space does not permit me to go into detail about the funeral service of the lodge, but any sincere Christian, who has attended one or read about them, knows that Masonry cannot and does not show the way to Eternal Life; nor does it give one particle of hope and comfort to the bereaved . Instead it leads men to hell and damnation. Its benediction reads, "May the blessing of Heaven rest upon us and all regular Masons!" Masonry is a positively selfish man-centered religion.

Therefore it is beyond me how a Mason can join himself with a church that confesses Christ as their only Saviour and how such a church can tolerate lodge members. Masons are like Judas Iscariots to the True Church. "Ye CANNOT serve God and Mammon." "Ye CANNOT partake of the table of the Lord and of the tabel of devils." "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers". "Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate." Such is the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the True Church.

My final article will deal with its secrecy, its terrible oaths and its influence upon our present modern civilized world.