YOUNG PROTESTANTS

FEBRUARY, 1941

Editorial
by Rev. C. Hanko

Bible Outlines
by Rev. P. De Boer

Discussion on the Canons
by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Book Review
by Rev. L. Vermeer

We Faithful Servants
by Rev. G. Lubbers
Like an eaglet returning from its first long flight back to its nest high up on some towering cliff, so the first issue of the Beacon Lights returns to the editor's desk, breathless and excitedly happy over its warm reception.

It is true, this first appearance was not without its disappointments. The greatest of which was, no doubt, that the printer, for various reasons was two weeks late in placing the magazine in the mails and thereby definitely created havoc in all previously arranged schedules. Many societies had arranged their programs in anticipation of a timely arrival of the magazine, which was but proper, only to meet with disappointment. We are more than sorry that this happened.

But the hearty reception soon banished every other thought. It so happened that the Fuller Ave. Young Men's Society favored your editor with an invitation to be present at the meeting, which was of social nature, at which the first issue was given out. So also there first hand information could be obtained on the first reaction of our young men, and, I must admit, it far exceeded my fondest hopes. There were expressions of approval, of surprise even, and no less of criticism.

Yes, even the criticisms could warm any one's heart. They show that our young people are not adopting this magazine as a foster-child which is forced upon them, but are receiving it as their very own, a product of their own efforts, and are not afraid to handle it, to eye it critically and to say exactly what they think of it.

There can be no doubt but that there is plenty of room for improvement, and suggestions are in order, for they can only mean the well being of the paper. Many of you will notice already in this issue that your remarks have not been entirely ignored, nor will they be in the future.

Although it is still too early to accurately register the complete reaction to this new venture, no one will deny that the reception was very favorable.

You may be interested to know that every society in our denomination, with but few exceptions, has subscribed to this magazine before it made its appearance. Since then new subscriptions are still coming in, more will follow, and we are confident that soon all of our young people's societies will be one hundred percent subscribers.

Already questions are being raised concerning the plans of the publication committee for the future.

Now that the Federation has its own periodical there is no one who wishes it an untimely death, but every one is eager to see it prosper and become as indispensable as it is invaluable in the societies and in the library of every one of our Protestant Reformed youth.

Having anticipated this question in advance the publication committee has its answer ready, at least in part.

As any member of the committee can inform you, all present arrangements are of a temporary and experimental nature. It will remain for the next annual Convention of the Federation to decide permanently on the name, the form and the contents.

This committee has all but completed its task when the last issue appears next May. All
that will still remain to be done is to give a detailed report of its work and offer suggestions for carrying on, that there need be no delay in the appearance of the first issue of the new year when the societies once more open their season next fall.

As to these first five months, the committee regards these as the trial period which will determine the future of the magazine. There can be no doubt any more but that it will have a future, yet it will undergo some changes before we have the product our young men and young women want. During this period all our young people will certainly gain a growing appreciation for the paper, will see its good points and advantages, but will also have suggestions to offer for its improvement. These suggestions will be carefully listed for the publication committee in order to present to the next Convention the benefits of this experiment in the form of concrete proposals as to how this work should be carried on.

All of which means that the success of this magazine depends as much on you as upon any one else. Make it your own. Read it to appreciate it; be free to offer suggestions for its improvement; urge others to read it.

Note: Because of lack of space a few articles from our contributors are held over for the next issue.

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**Bible Outlines**

**OUTLINE V**

**The Law**

**FIRST WEEK OF FEBRUARY**

Matt 5:17-20 — Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all shall be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

With vs. 17 a new section of the Sermon begins. The previous section (vss. 3-16) spoke of the citizens of the kingdom: the new section speaks of the righteousness of the kingdom. This new portion begins with vs. 17 of chapter 5 and continues through vs. 12 of chapter 7. It may be subdivided into three parts as follows:

1. The Righteousness of the Kingdom as in harmony with the law properly interpreted, 5:17-48.
2. The Righteousness of the Kingdom described in respect to our relation to God, chapter 6
3. The Righteousness of the Kingdom described in respect to our relation to men, 7:1-12.

The first of these three sections we begin to study in the present Outline. It begins by emphasizing that the righteousness of the kingdom is in harmony with the law itself (vss. 17-20), and continues by showing with several examples how the law is to be interpreted correctly over against the corrupt interpretation of a false tradition (vs. 21ff.)

The present outline is devoted to the thought that the righteousness of the kingdom is in harmony with the law.

I. "THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO DESTROY THE LAW, OR THE PROPHETS: I AM NOT COME TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFILL." Vs. 20.

A. "Think not." In these words Christ raises a warning finger, lest the thought be entertained that he has come to oppose the law. Perhaps the Saviour's rejection of the traditional interpretation of the Sabbath law (John 5, etc.) had led some to think that he rejected the law, and consequently brought something radically new. If so, Christ's emphatic warning was intended to
remove this false idea. However that may be, it is evident that Christ's reaction to the prevalent interpretation as contained in the sequence of this chapter might easily have led some to think that Christ opposed the old and came with something wholly other. To avoid this the Chief Teacher twice repeats "I am not come to destroy". None must think that he did come to destroy.

B. "...to destroy", "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill". To "destroy" means to "abrogate", to "overthrow". Men recall laws previously made: think of the 19th Amendment. Christ did not come to abrogate, to overthrow, to release us from the law. On the contrary He came to "fulfill", i.e. to carry it out, to bring it to pass, to realize it.

C. "The law or the prophets". A comparison with Luke 17:16 and Luke 24:27 shows that by the law and the prophets we must understand the entire Old Testament. "The law" refers to the institution of Israel's religion as incorporated in the books of Moses (Pentateuch), while "the prophets" refer to all that follows. Christ came to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures (Lk. 24:27), not to overthrow them. "The law" includes the entire law. Our present day distinction of moral, civil and ceremonial laws, was unknown to the Jews of Jesus' day. Yet the emphasis in the chapter falls upon the moral law, the so-called Decalogue, as is evident from the sequence. Neither must it be forgotten that the Ten Commandments are basic to all the other laws, and that therefore also the Ten Commandments were given first at Sinai not only, but also written indelibly upon tables of stone, while the others were not.

D. To better understand the import of this verse, bear in mind:

1. That the Old and New Testament are one. The New is the fulfillment of the Old.

2. That Christ fulfills the law: a. Because the types and prophecies are realized in him. The ceremonies and shadows attain their realization in Him, and consequently fall away as observances for the New Testament. b. Because Christ by His active and passive obedience redeems us from the curse of the law, Cal. 3:13. c. Because Christ by His Spirit writes the moral law in the hearts of His people, and causes them to walk in the law of God out of gratitude.

Questions: Did Christ bring something radically new? Is the Modernist assertion that the Old Testament preaches hate and the New Testament preaches love the teaching of Scripture? Do the ceremonial laws have any significance for us? How about the civil laws?

II. "FOR VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU. . . ." Vs. 18.

A. "Verily I say unto you". The English word "verily" is a translation of the Greek word "amen", a word which is used so frequently by all but only too often altogether too lightly. The word does not denote "the end", but means (cf. Lord's Day 52) "So it is", "So let it be". It indicates certainty and strong asseveration. In this verse it implies that the utterance to follow is a weighty one and must not pass unnoticed. The utterance is one of authority, "I say unto you". While the prophets said "Thus saith the Lord", Christ as the Son of God in the flesh speaks with His own authority. The very fact that he makes the whole fulfillment of the law hinge upon Himself and His work (vs. 17), and that He simply asserts His authority on a level equal with the Old Testament, imply Messianic self-consciousness.

B. "Till Heaven and Earth Pass". "Heaven and Earth" comprehend the whole of creation. Christ means to say that as long as the earth continues, the law stands. It will never be abrogated unto the end of the world. The text does not imply that after the passing of heaven and earth (II Pet. 3), that then the law will pass away. Not at all: Lk. 21:23, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away".

C. "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled". A jot is a small Hebrew letter resembling our comma, while the tittle is a small hook serving to distinguish between different Hebrew letters. The idiom might be compared to the familiar saying, "Dot your i's and cross your t's." The reference is to the details of the law; to what men might think insignificant elements. Note: one jot or one tittle, i.e. not not one single detail of the law shall pass away, "till all be fulfilled".

Questions: What does the word Amen mean? What is implied when the minister says "Amen" at the end of the Sermon? Are there any parts of the law that are of minor importance and can safely be disregarded? If not, do we always bear this in mind?

III. "WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL BREAK ONE OF THESE LEAST COMMANDMENTS. . . ." Vs. 19.

A. "One of these least commandments". The
traditional interpretation of Jesus’ day distinguished between great and small, more important and less important, commandments. The Savior upholds the validity and authority of the whole law, in its every part, nothing excluded.

B. “To do and teach them”. The law must be both taught and kept. Mere teaching is not enough. Also the Teach Them. “least” commandments must be taught and kept.

C. Although those that break the least commandments and teach others to do so, are conceived as entering the kingdom in its final glory, there is a difference. Those that have observed and taught all the law shall be “great”, while the others shall be called the “least”. This undoubtedly emphasizes the thought that the reward is according as the works shall be. Most emphatically then, Christ cannot be accused of teaching an abrogation of the law; on the contrary he teaches the binding character of the law more strictly than any other.

Questions: Do the present day Pre’s teach that the law must be kept? Will there be a difference in glory between one saint and the other? Must ministers only teach the great lines of Scripture or also the details?

IV. “FOR I SAY UNTO YOU. THAT EXCEPT YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL EXCEED...” Vs. 20.

A. “The Scribes and Pharisees”. They are often mentioned in one breath in Scripture. The Scribes represented a profession, whose employ was to study and interpret the law. The Pharisees were a sect, and they sought their righteousness by the works of the law. The New Testament also repeatedly mentions the Sadducees; these denied that there were angels and spirits, that man has a soul, that there is to be a resurrection. The latter were the full-fledged Modernists; while the Pharisees were the Formalists and Ritualists of today. The scribes and Pharisees understood the law literally, emphasized external religious observances; were outwardly very pious, but inwardly full of dead men’s bones. The Pharisees counted their righteousness, and looked upon righteousness as a quantitative something.

B. The Righteousness of the citizens of the Kingdom must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. That of the Pharisees Except Your is not enough to enter the kingdom. Righteousness done: only the righteousness of Exceed. Christ is enough. Perfect righteousness, perfect conformity to the law is necessary. The latter is not an accomplishment of human effort, but the gift of God in Christ.

C. Notice “in no case”. This is very emphatic and leaves no loophole at all. The scribes and Pharisees with their righteousness remain outside the kingdom. And so do we, except our righteousness exceed theirs. Nothing but the perfect righteousness gives admission to the kingdom of heaven.

Questions: Who were the scribes? Who were the Pharisees? Who were the Sadducees? What is meant by the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? Are there scribes and Pharisees among the church members today? If so, explain.

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OUTLINE

VI

The Sixth Commandment

SECOND WEEK OF FEBRUARY

MATT. 5:21-26 — Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the counsel: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with
thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Beginning in these verses, and continuing through the remainder of the chapter, there are examples given of the correct interpretation of the law over against the corrupt traditional interpretation. There are six examples in all. The first, with which these verses deal, regards the sixth commandment.

I. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION, vs. 21.

A. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time";
   "By them of old time" are to be understood the old interpreters of the law. It could not mean "Moses and the prophets" since then Christ would be opposing the law itself, something that is impossible in view of vss. 17-19. Besides, the quotations that follow Of Old Time. are not quotations from the law itself, but from the traditional interpretations of the law. The law of Moses had been misinterpreted by false teachers, the misinterpretations had been accepted as of equal value with the law, and this oral and traditional interpretation was recognized as the true and only one. It is this oral tradition, with which Jesus' disciples were well acquainted, that Christ emphatically opposes.

B. "Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment".

Notice that the second part of this quotation is not a part of the sixth commandment as given on Mt. Sinai, but an addition of men. From the sequence it is evident that this second part was intended as the limitation of the commandment's meaning. Only the act of murder itself was condemned, according to the oral tradition. The spiritual depth of the commandment was set aside, and the law understood literally, as a penal code. The appendage means: whosoever shall kill shall be liable to court action.

II. THE TRUE INTERPRETATION, vs. 22.

A. "But I say unto you". The "but" emphasizes contrast; Christ opposes the prevalent interpretation. Notice the "I say unto you" of authority.

B. "That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause. . . ."

1. Anger "without a cause" is also a transgression of the sixth commandment. Not only the overt act of murder, but also the inception of murder in the heart as anger, makes guilty.

2. There are degrees of sin. Christ mentions anger. Then there is anger expressed in words, revealing itself in terms of opprobrium: "Raca" meaning 'blockhead', 'fathead'; 'Thou fool', the term of greatest opprobrium.

3. Every sin against the sixth commandment makes liable to punishment. Not only the overt act of murder, but also the unexpressed anger of the heart. "The judgment" was the local court established in every city; "the council" was the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem (comparable perhaps to our Supreme Court). Both could sentence to death for murder; in the case of the local court execution was by the sword, in the case of the Sanhedrin by stoning. "The hell of fire", literally "the Gehenna of fire", received its name from the valley of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem where the refuse of the city continually burned.

4. Christ clearly implies that every sin against the sixth commandment, although there are degrees of sin, make liable to death. In their essential nature "anger without a cause" and "murder" are the same.


A. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, . . .", vss. 23, 24.

In brief these words teach that no act of worship has any value at all in the sight of God, if the heart is not right with the brother. If anyone has trespassed against his brother, actually is Brother guilty (the context speaks of "anger without a cause", of calling him "fathead", "fool"), then he may not proceed with his acts of worship until he has gone to reconcile himself with the brother. The latter done, he may come.

B. "Agree with thine adversary". According to the context the adversary is the brother whom we have given cause to be offended. In these two verses (25, 26) the Saviour emphasizes the need of reconciliation with the brother; lest we die unreconciled and be punished in hell. The thought is figuratively, parabolically, expressed.
Vs. 26 does not imply that it is possible to pay the debt, as though release may be obtained from hell. It simply states the fact that sin against the brother is serious, and receives full punishment. There is no parole possible, or time off for good behavior. God's sentence will be meted out to the full.

Questions: Does Christ oppose the law of Moses? Are the Modernists correct when they assert that Christ taught something radically new? Does Catholicism put oral tradition on a level with Scripture? Are old traditions necessarily true and binding? Is there a justifiable anger? If so, explain. Is there a hell? Why is it wicked to go to the Lord's Supper unreconciled with the brother?

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OUTLINE

VII

The Seventh Commandment

THIRD WEEK

OF FEBRUARY

MATT. 5:27-32 — Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, save for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committheth adultery.

I. THE SIN OF ADULTERY, vss. 27-30.

A. As Such:

1. The scribes and Pharisees in their interpretation of the seventh commandment limited the meaning of the commandment to the act of adultery proper. Only the overt act as such stood condemned. In their condemnation of this sin, they were very emphatic, cf. John 8:3ff. And, indeed, Christians should most emphatically condemn adultery, wherever and whenever it occurs. Scripture in no uncertain terms always condemns it, both in the Old and in the New Testament.

2. But the commandment condemns much more than adultery proper. Under the heading of adultery, every form of bodily uncleanness fails, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed Adultery in Thought. adultery already in his heart." The mere thought of adultery is sin and makes guilty before God. When the law of God condemns the sin in its most gross form, it by implication condemns the sin in every form and degree, even its inception in the heart.

B. "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out. . . ." vss. 29, 30.

These words may not be understood literally. Thus some have understood them in the past, and some have been led to mutilate their bodies, thinking that Christ's injunction demanded it. However, it is an error to interpret the injunction literally. Were we to do so, we would commit the same error of Pluck Out The Eye. literal interpretation which Jesus so strenuously condemns in this Sermon. Besides, if one literally plucks out one eye, the other remains and the sin can still be committed. It is the offence, the occasion to stumbling, that must be plucked out by its very roots from the heart. This must be done whatever the price, and the highest price will still be cheap, "for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell". The repetition (vs. 29, the eye; vs. 30, the hand) serves to emphasize the importance of the injunction. The right eye and the right hand are spoken of, and this because the right members of the body are those that are pre-eminent. The sense is that the very best is
not to be spared where the welfare of our souls is concerned.

The following two texts may serve as a commentary: Col. 3:5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence . . . ."; Eph. 5:3-5, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting,. . . . for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, . . . . hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God".

In brief, Christ teaches: Avoid anything that by its very nature leads to sin against the seventh commandment.

Questions: How does Lord's Day 41 interpret the seventh commandment? Is there much respect for this commandment in our nation today? Should Christians read suggestive and other lewd literature? Do you see any argument here against movie attendance? What is the chief objection against dancing?

II. DIVORCE, Vss. 31, 32.

A. "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement", vs. 31.

1. The traditional view of divorce allowed divorce upon most any ground. Matt. 19:3 says "for any reason". This view was supposed to be based upon Deut. 24:1, especially the part, "and it come to pass that she find no Many Grounds favor in his eyes". This was For Divorce understood to refer to anything from adultery to a single bad meal. It is evident, if one reads the text carefully, that the above phrase is limited to adultery, since there is immediately added "because he hath found some uncleanness in her". Hence the scribes and Pharisees incorrectly appealed to the text. Neither must we imagine that they did so ignorantly; on the contrary, the corruption was a deliberate attempt to make room for sin.

2. Add to this, that instead of placing the emphasis upon the ground of the divorce, the scribes and Pharisees placed the emphasis upon the formal granting of the bill of divorce. A husband might divorce his wife provided he only saw to it that the letter of divorce was properly filled out and presented to the partner. If the latter took place, then all was in order. Not the ground, but the letter was the important thing!

B. "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife . . . ." vs. 32.

1. Christ recognizes but one legitimate ground for divorce: adultery.

The Only All divorce is sin against the Biblical Ground, seventh commandment; "saving for the cause of fornication".


2. Whereas the scribes and Pharisees taught that a man's responsibility ended with the mere letter of divorce, Christ insists that the man that puts away his wife upon unscriptural grounds "causeth her to commit adultery". This may mean: either, that by being unjustly divorced the woman suffers as though she had committed adultery; or, that, presupposing her re-marriage, the husband by his wickedness has made her guilty of adultery. The latter explanation would seem to be in harmony with the last part of the text, "and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

3. These words clearly imply that no man or woman divorced upon unbiblical grounds have the right to re-marry. If they do, they become guilty of adultery. God does not recognize such divorces.

Question: Is divorce assuming alarming proportions in our nation today? May the church admit into her membership those divorced upon un-Biblical grounds? May the innocent party of a divorce, granted upon the ground of adultery, re-marry? May man and wife live separately if they cannot get along and yet have no legitimate ground for divorce? Must a divorce follow if one of the partners is guilty of adultery? How are we to look upon the much divorced and married actors and actresses of Hollywood in the light of Christ's words?

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OUTLINE VIII

The Third Commandment

FOURTH WEEK OF FEBRUARY

MATT. 5:33-37 — Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all;
neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

These verses deal with the oath. In the oath an appeal is made to the name of God for the purpose of calling God to witness to the truth of one's assertion. Hence the

The Oath. oath, because it makes use of God's name, falls under the third commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain..." The Heidelberg Catechism also treats the oath in connection with this commandment, cf. Lord's Days 36 and 37. However, in the case of false testimony, it also implies sin against the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness..."

I. THE TRADITIONAL VIEW, vs. 33.

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths".

To forswear one's self is to swear by God's name falsely. Lev. 19:2. By an ingenious interpretation of Lev. 19:2, "Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely", the scribes Corruption Of and Pharisees allowed all swearing.

The Oath. provided the name of God were carefully avoided. If the name of God were literally used, then the oath was binding and must be kept. Num. 30:2. But all oaths by anything else were allowed, perhaps even false oaths. Cf. Matt. 23:16-22 for a clear example of so-called permissible oaths.

II. CHRIST'S INTERPRETATION, vss. 34-37. "Swear not at all. . . ."

A. What we may not conclude from these verses:

1. We may not conclude that all oaths are sinful, that it is always under every circumstance wrong for a Christian to submit to an oath, as the Quakers, Mennonites, etc. teach.

The Quakers They appeal to this verse and to And The Oath. James 5:12 for their contention that a Christian may never take an oath. The law of our land also releases Quakers and others from the obligation of submitting to an oath, when called to court, etc.

2. Why we may not conclude

All Oaths Not Sinful. that oaths are in themselves sinful and permissible:

a. Because vs. 37, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" does not necessarily imply that everything beyond a simple yea is in itself sinful. The text says that what is beyond the yea "cometh of evil", but this is not the same as "is evil". For example, our clothing is necessary because of sin, it came into the world on account of sin, but the wearing of clothing is not sin. It cometh of evil, but it is not in itself evil. To argue in favor of Nudism because clothing came after and on account of sin, would certainly be contrary to Scripture. Similarly, although oaths, contracts, etc. have become necessary in the world by reason of sin, "cometh of evil", does not mean that they are inherently evil.

b. Moreover, the Word of God clearly proves that oaths are in themselves not sinful. The false oath and the secret oath, are sinful. But the oath properly used is not. Proof: God swears an oath. Gen. 22:16, 17; Christ allowed himself to be placed under an oath. Matt. 26:36, 64: the oath was commanded by the law in some instances, Ex. 22:11: Num. 5:21; various saints made use of the oath: Abraham took an oath of Eliezer. Joseph of his brethren, Paul swears an oath in II Cor. 1:23. Surely, then, the oath itself cannot be inherently sinful

c. Furthermore, the context of Matt. 5 clearly speaks of trivial oaths, of sinful oaths.

d. Finally. Christ is addressing the citizens of the kingdom. "I say unto you", and consequently speaks of the rule to obtain in the church.

B. What we must conclude from these verses:

1. That the oath is always "by thy name". It is wrong to swear by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by one's head. How can these objects attest and corroborate our word? Besides, these things are God's, and to swear by them is still to swear by God. Hence, if there is to be an oath it should be by God's name.

2. That all trivial swearing, all false oaths, all secret oaths (as in the lodges, labor unions, Boy Scouts, etc.) is wrong.

3. That every word the Christian speaks must be spoken as though it were done under oath. "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth". The Christian's word must always be truthful. In our relation to one another in the church, we must strive after the simple "Yea, yea;
Nay, nay”. Then there is no need of oaths, or even of written contracts, etc.

4. That the Christian recognize that everything beyond the “Yea, yea; Nay, nay comes of evil. Therefore if he is called upon to use more than this, it is because of sin. When sin goes, the oath goes because there is no more need of it.

5. That the Christian should not volunteer an oath. He must be ready to take it if the authorities or the welfare of the neighbor demand, but must not volunteer it. A Christian who always speaks the truth will not feel the need of the oath for himself. Only liars need to rely on their oath, simply because their word is usually not trustworthy.

Questions: May a Christian use such phrases as “Betcha’ life”, “Sure as I live”, etc.? What are the three requirements of a legitimate oath? May one submit to a secret oath? Is there any difference between an oath, and signing a pledge card? Is it right for a contractor to require that his word of honor be accepted without a written agreement? What is Nudism?

**Discussion on the Canons**

These notes have been contributed by Rev. H. Hoeksema and edited by Rev. C. Hanko.

**QUESTIONS**

26. Which expressions in article 6 reveal the infralapsarian standpoint?
27. In what way do men wrest the doctrine of predestination to their own destruction? Art. 6.
28. What is the unspeakable consolation of the doctrine of election to holy and pious souls? Who are these?
29. How does the infra-view appear in article 7?
30. Which other terms besides “purpose” can you find in Scripture for the counsel of God?
31. Enumerate the different elements in the definition article 7 (first paragraph) gives of election?
32. Unto what blessings of grace did God elect His people? Art. 7.

**ANSWERS**

26. The infralapsarian standpoint is evident from the following expressions: “while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy”: and, “the righteous discrimination between men equally involved in ruin”. In the first expression the decree of reprobation is referred to as the leaving of the non-elect in their sin. This presupposes sin. God, therefore, saw in His decree the reprobate as fallen. And the second expression speaks of God as discriminating between men equally involved in ruin. This presupposes the ruin of sin before the discrimination is made and is, therefore, infralapsarian.
27. The expression in article 6 is evidently taken from II Pet. 3:16: “As also in all his (Paul’s) epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood,” which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” They do this:

a. By answering against God: “Why doth He yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will?” Rom. 9:19. For this evinces the spirit of rebellion.

b. By denying the truth and teaching free-will. Thus they deny the sovereignty of God.

c. By making the doctrine of predestination an excuse for a walk in sin. “Let us sin, that grace may abound!”

28. The unspeakable consolation of this doctrine to pious souls is that they are assured that nothing can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. Rom. 8:37-39.

This consolation, however, is only for holy and pious souls. That is, for those believers that seal their faith and confession by a walk in sanctification and earnest endeavor to walk in all good works. Even believers have this consolation only according as they walk in holiness.

29. Article 7 states, that election is the purpose of God whereby He hath chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ. This is evidently the infra standpoint. God chose from a fallen human race.

The same is true of the following expression: “This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them equally involved in one common misery. God hath decreed to give to Christ”.

30. Note the following expressions: “he hath chosen us”, Eph. 1:4; “having predestinated us”. Eph. 1:5; “the good pleasure of his will”, Eph.
1:5; "the mystery of his will", Eph. 1:9; "his good pleasure", Eph. 1:9; "the counsel of his own will", Eph. 1:11; "the purpose of God according to election", Rom. 9:11; "foreknowledge", Rom. 8:29, 11:2, I Pet. 1:2; "the election of grace", Rom. 11:5.

31. The following elements may be distinguished in the definition of election in article 7:
   a. It is the unchangeable purpose of God.
   b. It is eternal: before the foundation of the world.
   c. The motive is "mere grace".
   d. It is "sovereign good pleasure".
   e. It is election from the whole human race.
   f. It is election unto redemption in Christ.
   g. Christ is appointed Mediator and Head of the elect.

32. They are elected unto the following blessings:
   a. To be given to Christ.
   b. To be saved (redeemed) by Him.
   c. To be called and drawn into His communion effectually.
   d. Unto faith.
   e. Unto justification.
   f. Unto sanctification.
   g. Unto preservation.
   h. Unto glorification.

QUESTIONS

33. What does article 8 emphasize? Why?

34. What does article 9 teach; and against whom is it directed?

35. What did the Arminians teach instead of "personal" election? Art. 10.

36. What is said of the doctrine of election in article 11?

37. How may we come to a personal assurance of our own election? Art. 12.

38. Which fruits especially may assure us, that God has chosen us to salvation? Art. 12.

39. What should be the effect of the doctrine of election upon them that believe? Art. 13. What is often alleged to be the effect?

ANSWERS

33. Article 8 emphasizes the oneness and unchangeableness of the degree of election because the Arminians spoke of various decrees of election, definite and indefinite, of election unto salvation and election unto faith and unto final glory, all because they wished to place the ground and reason of election in man. See Head of Doctrine 1, section B, article 2.

34. Article 9 teaches that election is the ultimate fountain and ground of our salvation, and that, therefore, itself does not find its ground in anything of man which God foresaw. The latter is the teaching of the Arminians.

35. The Arminians taught that God had chosen certain qualities or actions of man as conditions with which man must comply in order to be saved. Thus God might have chosen: the law and the righteousness of the law; instead He chose faith and perseverance. The Reformed fathers taught that election concerns persons, known unto God by name. See I, B, 3-5.

36. That the election of God is unchangeable. Again in opposition to the Arminians. See I, B, 6.

37. The Arminians naturally denied that one could ever be certain of his election unto glory, seeing it depends to the very last upon man's own will whether he is to be saved or no. But the Reformed fathers, who taught that faith and sanctification are not the ground, but the fruit of election, taught that the Christians do possess that certainty by observing in themselves these fruits, such as faith in Christ, filial fear, godly sorrow, hunger and thirst after righteousness. See II, B, 7.

38. We may notice that the article refers especially to inward, spiritual fruits in distinction from outward good works. Among these hunger and thirst after righteousness and godly sorrow for sin are very important, seeing that the elect Christian remains sinful and imperfect till the day of his death. Not perfection is a fruit that may assure us, but rather the inward spiritual attitude over against our sin and the longing for perfection.

39. Daily humiliation before God and an earnest desire to walk in all good works, to keep themselves unsotted from the world, is the fruit of the faith of election and personal certainty of it. For, it causes us to acknowledge our own insignificance and the greatness of God's mercy. Usually it is alleged that this doctrine causes carelessness and profanity. But the Canons correctly emphasize that this is never the case with them that believe their personal election, but only with those that refuse to walk in the way of God's precepts.

QUESTIONS

40. Ought the doctrine of election to be preached? If so, how should it be done? Art. 14.

41. What is the relation between the doctrine of election and other doctrines?
42. Of what doctrine does article 15 speak? What is its standpoint?
43. Does the doctrine of reprobation make God the author of sin? Art. 15.
44. What is the purpose of reprobation? Art. 15.
45. Who need not be alarmed at the truth of reprobation? Who should? Art. 16.

ANSWERS

40. Most certainly this doctrine must be preached and taught in the Church. The Canons remark that the prophets declared this doctrine, Christ preached it and so did the apostles. It does not belong to the secret, but to the revealed things. It must, however, be done spiritually, not carnally. A mere cold discussion of the doctrine of election is not preaching. Besides, it must be done at the proper time and place, that is, not as a doctrine separated from the rest, so that once a year a sermon is preached on the doctrine of predestination in order never to mention it again, but in its proper connection with the whole of the truth. Moreover, the Canons mention that we must not investigate the secret and deep ways of God, that is, although the doctrine of election is revealed, the details are often hid. We cannot follow the Lord in His ways, which are higher than our ways. The secret things belong to the Lord our God.
41. The relation between the doctrine of election and other doctrines is such that it is of central significance. By the acceptance or denial of the doctrine of election the whole system of the truth is affected; think of the doctrine of total depravity, of atonement, of regeneration, faith, conversion and the perseverance of the saints. Hence, our fathers called this doctrine the “heart of the Church”.
42. Article 15 speaks of the doctrine of reprobation. Its standpoint is infra, as is evident from the expressions: “passed by in the eternal decree”; and: “hath decreed to leave in the common misery”. Mark, however, that even so the expression: “passed by in the decree” does not mean that the reprobates have no place in the decree, but that God sovereignly decreed not to save them.
43. The doctrine of reprobation does not make God the author of sin, as we noticed before. Nevertheless, it does not merely present Him as the righteous judge and avenger of sin, but also as absolute sovereign in His good pleasure.
44. The purpose of reprobation is, according to article 15, the revelation of the justice of God. No doubt this is true. There is, however, according to the general teaching of Scripture, another purpose, which must not be forgotten. It must serve the realization of election, as the chaff serves the wheat.
45. Briefly, those that do not yet clearly discern in themselves the work of God’s grace, but faithfully walk in the covenant way, should not be alarmed at this doctrine. They have no reason to think that they belong to the reprobate. Nor ought the imperfect children of God who are troubled by their sin. But they that walk in sin and lead a carnal life may justly be terrified by this doctrine as long as they walk in such sin.

We Faithful Servants

By Rev. G. Lubbers

Do you have the courage to face this question squarely and answer with an unequivocal yes or no? Painfully we are reminded in the same that we are servants in our deepest being, and that we shall ever be such, whether that be in deepest hell, or in the highest heaven of God’s glory revealed. And the one supreme question for the servant, the slave to answer is this: Am I faithful? For the servant bought with the precious blood of Christ the question becomes: Am I faithful as it be-hooves me to be in “my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ”?

That man is a servant, is a scriptural truth. We are either servants of God or servants of sin and death. Either we are obedient to righteousness and life in Christ Jesus, or enslaved to unrighteousness, deceitfulness, the lie! Thus the Word of God presents the matter for our prayerful consideration.

I want to believe in this writing, my youthful reader, that you love God. That you consciously and willingly, daily choose God to be your highest Good. That by the power of almighty grace you know yourself to be God’s servant, and as such His child.

Faithfulness Expected.

It is expected in a servant that he be found trustworthy, faithful, obedient. This is the crowning beauty, the fit spiritual adornment of servants.
Whoever has servants looks for faithfulness in them to his cause. So it is with Satan. Strictly speaking, Satan, the Arch-Foe has no cause. His force is the cause of a rebellious "ministering spirit". But even as such he expects strict compliance in his servants to his diabolical program. Thus it is with our modern dictators. He who is not faithful to their cause is crushed with ruthless force. They expect strict and absolute trustworthiness.

Our God Who is the loving Father of His children, is at once also the Consuming Fire. He looks for faithfulness in us, strict adherence to His cause in the midst of this world. Uncompromisingly we are to champion His cause, dwelling under His care, love, grace and protection. And we are weighed in the balances to be found faithful. We may not be traitors to God's cause. This means that God demands of us that we serve Him only. We are to confess from pure hearts and sincere lips that God alone is worthy of our love and affection. It also means that we serve God wholly. We shall be faithful servants to God with our whole heart and mind and strength. Always we must remember that we are the Lord's! My time is His, my strength is His, I am but a servant-steward of Him.

A Constant Ideal.

To be sure this "ideal" is more than a hazy, mystical something. It is more than a fit subject to be dated in the halls of learning, and a matter of oration and eloquence on the pulpit. It is a God-given ideal laid down in His Word, which is attainable through faith in Jesus Christ. It is therefore an ideal which can be brought concretely into practice, be it always but in part and imperfectly, as an expression of gratitude to God for deliverance from the bondage of sin. No, this ideal is no mirage of the desert which when we attempt to reach eludes us, though we must not too soon pretend that we have attained unto the ideal of faithfulness. It is the high ideal of the perfection of God unto which we must evermore be conformed by the Word and Spirit of God.

For this ideal we strive. For it is God who works in us both to will and to do according to His good-pleasure. And then tremulously we ask: Lord, what would Thou have us do? Teach us by Thy Word and Spirit. Thy Word is a lamp unto our—yea, my feet. In this atmosphere of childlike faith and humility it becomes clear to me, that in the striving for the ideal-goal of steward-faithfulness, many run, but that he that runs well obtains the reward. That affords drive and impetus to my life. I stretch out unto the prize of the high calling of God. It puts me aflame for God!

What! young people aflame for God, and that constantly? How old must one be? Must he be learned? Ah no! One must be taught of God. Then God stills the mouth of the enemy through the testimony of the singing children. For God has prepared praise (strength) for Himself thru the mouth of babes!

This ideal God holds before us, dear youthful reader. I am called to have great zeal for Him. I must stretch out for the "mark" today. In my present congregation, present catechism class, society. Faithful to my parents I must be. And woe is me if I do not. God is serious and always takes me at my word.

Proper Stimulation.

Faithfulness in God's servants can be stimulated. And God requires of us that we shall do so. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

Naturally, where there is no life, there can be no stimulation of the same. If the heart has stopped beating, and the blood has ceased pulsating in our veins, no amount of stimulation can stir the heart and body to greater action.

But where there is life, there can be stimulation to a richer glow of health and life. And so it is also spiritually.

This requires, first of all, spiritual knowledge of self. It calls for careful spiritual self-analysis in the light of God's Word. We must be honest with ourselves, before God and our conscience. This requires honest instruction, love for truth. We must have a readiness of mind for God's analysis of our self-deceptive heart. God's analysis of our self-deceptive heart. God's analysis of our desires, motives, plans, intentions, must be for us the only court of appeal.

This also demands the watchfulness and the struggle of prayer. He who prays little, receives little. He who prays doubtingly receives nothing from the Lord. Whatevsoever we need to be faithful God gives to those petitioning the same, in order that He may be glorified through Christ in us. A faithful servant is often found on his knees in prayer and supplication, saying with Jacob: "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me."

Faithfulness is also stimulated by seeking the fellowship of others who fear and love the Lord. If we choose our companions and friends out of the world, we seek the stimulation of the world. Then the evil desires are set aglow, it is the ghastly fire of hell! These things should not be, Young protestants! But we should rather
sing with David: For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Ps. 84:10. For he that would be a friend of this world, shall be accounted an enemy of God.

Accountability.

Each day the servant has a reckoning to make with his master. So each day we have an account to straighten with our God. And this account is made out on the basis of our works. Then it is not the question, how popular I am with my friends, what people say about me. The only thing that has weight is: Does God when He weighs me in the balances find me to be a faithful servant, or does He find me wanting.

Faithfulness is awarded in this life. He that is faithful in little in the kingdom, is also faithful in much. Conversely it is true that those who are unfaithful in a little are also in much. God gives to His faithful servants more grace, and takes from the unfaithful what they even think to possess.

Here also all respect of persons falls away. Here no prejudice of men can spare us or condemn us. Let us walk carefully, faithfully looking for the reward of the faithful.

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Book Review


We stated in our introductory remarks that we would from time to time review and recommend works of biography. As you may know many books of this nature are rather dry and uninteresting, probably because they give a detailed exposition of only one person. "A Book of Protestant Saints", however, deals with 25 different personages who have occupied a more or less prominent position in the history of the Christian Church. For this reason the 25 biographical sketches contained in the book's 190 pages are necessarily comparatively short. We found that this fact added to the interest of the book more than if long, detailed accounts of the individual lives were recorded.

The author's success at having focused all attention on the devoutness and sacrifices of these Christian heroes is very commendable. It also becomes apparent throughout the book that the author colors the various life sketches with his emphasis on the fundamental truths as opposed to modernism. We would caution our youth to be alert, however, to discern in these sketches traces of Arminianism which (perhaps unknown to the author and therefore written in ignorance) must eventually lead to modernism. Another unfavorable element which we must point out is the emphasis laid upon the fact that these lives were consumed more with a love for their fellow-men than a love for the "house of God". It is true, of course, that we must love our neighbors as ourselves, but the love for our neighbor must proceed from and find its basis in our love for God. We can never truly love our neighbor if the love of God is not the ruling principle of our lives.

Finally, I would remark that the author has not chosen a very appropriate title for his book. It indicates that he wishes to place over-against the Saints which the Catholic Church honors, and even worships, other so-called Protestant Saints. Our objection is not that we doubt that the persons whose lives are sketched were indeed saints but that these saints are not distinct as such from other people of God. According to Scripture every child of God is a saint, cf. Eph. 1:1 and 1 John 2:20. The author evidently proceeds from the supposition that there saints as well as OTHER CHILDREN OF GOD, which we would deny. Surely there is a difference of degree in the walk of the one child of God or another, but there is no such distinction in sainthood. To be a saint is the blessed privilege of everyone who is sanctified in the blood of the Redeemer. The author has, however, very beautifully pictured the saintliness and devotion of the men and women whose lives he sketches. We would recommend this book to our young people as being both interesting and educational.


We can heartily recommend for study and inspirational reading these three books on the pas-
sion and death of Christ by Dr. Schilder, who had until recently been held in bondage by the Nazi overlords of Holland, but who has now returned to Kampen. These three books are the very best obtainable on this subject both for study and meditation. They have been translated into the English language by Dr. Henry Zylstra. We readily admit that it takes more than a superficial mind to read and digest the contents, but we believe that our Protestant Reformed young people are sufficiently intellectual to be able to gain the benefit of sound and instructive works such as Dr. Schilder here offers.

If there are societies that have established a library of their own or from time to time contribute to a church library, there could be found no better contribution to such a library than these three books. They are neatly bound, so that they will enhance the beauty and neatness of any library.

The contents offer material for the study of the passion and death of Christ and are very rich and precious to us while we are recalling the sufferings of our Lord. It is true that Dr. Schilder, who wrote these valuable books in their original Holland language as early as 1929, would today have made certain changes, not only as to the exegesis given to some passages, but also to certain concepts which appear in the works. Personally, I believe that Dr. Schilder since 1929 has edged more and more away from the theory of Common Grace, especially as this theory is embodied in the “Three Points” of the Christian Reformed Churches. This is very plain from his more recent writings in which he has repeatedly stated that he could never believe in the “Three Points” as they are maintained by the afore-mentioned churches. However, regardless even of these weaknesses in the three books, which our Prot. Ref. Youth will be able to discern, we heartily recommend them. Our Lord becomes ever more dear and precious to us while reviewing any or all of the passages pertaining to His suffering as keenly explained in these books.

**The Age Of The Maccabees**

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:**

Because it is impossible to finish the printing of a story of the usual size in this volume, which will run only throughout the month of May, the undersigned sought for, but could not obtain a short story for this department of “Beacon Lights.” Consequently he presents to our readers this short history of “The Age of the Maccabees”. It has historical value for our youth, and gives us a glimpse into the history of a few faithful Jews during the darkest period of Israel’s history, the few centuries before the coming of our Saviour. The booklet has seven chapters and fills 94 pages. So we hope it may be printed in its entirety in the next four issues of our magazine. It is written by the Rev. H. F. Henderson of England. The copyrights have been cancelled so that we have free use of its publication. Even as the late Bishop Westcott writes about this booklet: “History offers no parallel to the un-daunted courage with which the Maccabean brothers dared to face death, one by one, in the maintenance of a holy cause. The result was worthy of the sacrifice.” We urge our young people (and it is of immense interest also to our older men and women) to carefully follow this story.

L. Vermeer.

**CHAPTER 1**

Contact With Hellenism

1. The Persian and Greek Yokes.—During the post-exilic period, the Jews of that time felt the Persian yoke a grievous and intolerable burden. They accordingly welcomed a change of tyrant in the person of Alexander the Great. To that victorious commander they cheerfully resigned themselves, looking to him for a measure of toleration and favor they had not hitherto enjoyed. If we are to believe Josephus, the Macedonian ruler bestowed upon them certain substantial benefits as a token or sample of what they might expect under his rule. After his day, a serious struggle ensued for the government of the country, in which three different competitors aspired to the position of ruler, Antigonus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. The Battle of Ipsus in 301 B.C. decided the quarrel in Ptolemy’s favor. On the whole, this was a happy conclusion of the matter so far as concerned both the religious and the secular interests of the Jews. The first three Ptolemies were wise statesmen, who permitted the Jews to indulge their own peculiarities and to sit under their vine and fig trees without molestation. In process of time, however, a change of affairs took place. Somewhere about 198 B.C. the Egyptian army was driven from the Holy Land, a new reign inaugurated—that of the Seleucids—and a set of influences introduced destined to exercise a dangerous fascination over the inhabitants of the land. And so the dream of Alexander the Great bade fair to be realized.
His ambition to conquer the world had been only the means to an end. His desire was to see Greek culture and customs universally spread, and his plan was to plant colonies of his countrymen in all the lands he conquered. This work went on after him until the spirit of Hellenism, as it is called, reached Palestine itself.

2. How the Jew regarded his Gentile Neighbour.—To the mind of an orthodox Jew, to whom the traditions and customs of his land were sacred, the world of Gentile habits and ideas was evil and abhorrent. Nor was such a man greatly moved by the threatened annihilation of Israel’s faith and nationality under the influence of heathen government and thought. The power of paganism might prosper for a time. Sooner or later Jehovah would stir up His strength, and the arm of heathenism would be broken. This was the creed of the conservative Jew, and his attitude towards rampant Gentilism was a sullen endurance of insult and injustice and a stubborn abhorrence of Gentile novelties and innovations. He regarded these things with silent detestation, remembered the covenant which God made with his fathers, and bided his time.

But there was another type of Jew who was more conciliatory and compromising. To him also the Gentile was an enemy of Jehovah, a despiser of the Divine law, not to be tolerated for what he was at present. But as he looked forward to the day when the Gentile would be Jehovah’s subject and servant, he held him worthy to be regarded, not as an object of dislike, but of interest; one to be approached as near as it was safe to do so, rather than at arm’s length. He felt it his duty to find as many points of agreement as possible. About the time of the Maccabees this new spirit of comity between Jew and Gentile began to appear, and is seen reflected in books like Jonah, Coheleth, and Ecclesiasticus. In these books Jehovah is seen displaying an interest in the Gentiles, in one case sending them a prophet to warn them of their sins, in another throwing the requirements of Jewish legalism into the background as something not at all fundamental, but fated to pass away, the essential and eternal requirement being to fear God and keep His commandments.

Now although the two different attitudes here described were not necessarily antagonistic or incompatible with one another, but might be found co-existing side by side, in point of fact they constituted two different ways of looking at the subject and divided people into sides. On the one hand there were those who ever held themselves separate and aloof from the ways of the Gentiles, and opposed them by a determined and unyielding resistance. Such persons would not conform to Gentilism in the smallest jot or tittle. Let the Gentile come over to their law, or let his power be broken. Israel cannot turn her back upon her glorious past or be drawn into the vortex of heathen corruption. On the other hand, there were Jews who saw in vision a larger Divine polity and a world-wide Kingdom of God. They felt the spell of Greek life and culture, and they wished to share it. To them it might not be altogether an innocent world, but neither was it forbidden ground.

The party of stern principle and the party of accommodation, as they may be called, then divided Jewish society. Each contended for the mastery, and at time passed they were not brought nearer, but went farther apart. Both parties pined their followers with plausible arguments. The one appealed to the patriotic instinct and the august claims of the Divine law. The other counted on the power of liberal ideals, the love of novelty, and the favor of the ruling classes to win the day. "They who wanted to effect anything in the political world", says Schurer, "found that they must stand on a friendly footing with Hellenism". Hellenism accordingly proved attractive to all worldly-minded Jews, and to the upper ranks of the priesthood. For a time, as we shall see, the puritanical party fell into the shade, while the party of conformity became ascendant. Heathen habits of life and worship thrust themselves forward without let or hindrance. Ultimately, however, under Judas Maccabaeus and his successors, a powerful tide of resistance set in which, rising higher and higher, swept back the flood of heathen encroachment and arrogance, and at last restored the supremacy of strict Judaism.

3. Spread of Hellenism.—The liking for Hellenistic forms of life just referred to was not a growth natural to the soil of Judaism, but an importation from foreign lands where the Dispersion had taken deep root and flourished. The philosophic soil of Alexandria was its natural home. There, under the enlightened rule of Ptolemy 1 and II, the Jews who had made Alexandria their home found much to encourage them in the cultivation of liberal sentiment. They found a ruler so emancipated from bigotry and intolerance that he sanctioned the translation of the Jewish Scriptures into Greek. Then again in the army and the civil service of Egypt, the Jews of the Dispersion who made Egypt their home, by their conspicuous ability won their way to appointments of influence and honor, to the deep mortification of the natives of the country, who ever afterwards regarded them with feeling of envy and dislike.

In this heathen atmosphere, so favorable to the destruction of provincialism, the Jewish character underwent changes of the most critical kind. Such changes were at first more frequently seen in places like Alexandria, where Jews abounded, and where, as we have just seen, they learned so well how to take occasion by the hand. In such places the Jew rapidly succumbed to Greek habits of life, as we have said, found it advantageous and necessary to do so. By degrees the spirit of conformity travelled home to Jerusalem. The time came when the upper classes began to affect the peculiar tones and manners of their Greek neighbours, and even to be ashamed of their own racial peculiarities.

In this degenerate yielding to the fashion of the hour, there were no transgressors so guilty as the higher ranks of the priesthood. The high priest himself often led the way in these unpatriotic courses. The high priest Jason, for instance, contributed a large amount of money to the maintenance of a heathen shrine at a festival in honour of Hercules. It is true the bearers of the gift, having the fear of God before their eyes, were shocked beyond measure at the conduct of the high priest, and instead of devoting the money to the purpose intended, spent it in building several war-galleys (2 Mace. IV. 18). The incident shows that many belonging to humbler walks of life than that of the aristocratic priestly caste refused to bow the knee to Baal or take the wages of unrighteousness.

4. Introduction of Greek Manners and Customs.—The Hellenising tendencies, which in the second and third centuries before Christ, influenced the ruling classes among the Jews, manifested themselves in the ordinary and familiar things of life. Thus they changed the naming of the months from the Hebrew to the Greek nomenclature, and the era of the Seleucids, dating from 312 B.C., the year that saw Seleucus victorious over Antigonus, became now the point of reckoning in all civil contracts among the
Jews, and so continued till the Middle Ages. Personal and family names also changed from the Hebrew to the Greek: Jehoiakim becoming Aleinus; Solomon, Alexander; Joseph. Menelaus; Judas, Aristobulus, and so forth. In still another detail of nomenclature the Hellenising spirit made its appearance. The Jewish inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem called themselves from this time, and allowed themselves to be called Antiochians, or citizens of Antioch.

But these after all were trifling innovations, that even the stricter sort of Jews might easily tolerate. It was a different thing when the Greek palaestra was set up in Jerusalem under the immediate shadow of the Citadel. That was a graver symptom of corruption. In the palaestra young men belonging to well-known Jewish families might be seen taking part in the Greek sports instituted originally in honor of Hercules. They stripped themselves bare, ran, wrestled, leaped, and donned the hat used by the youth of Athens on such occasions. The love of the Greek games grew on the Jews so overpoweringly, that old and venerable men were to be found who could converse about nothing else; and it is said that during the pontificate of the worldly-minded Jason the very priests would run from the altar, leaving their religious duties unfinished, in order to witness the games and enjoy the excitements of the palaestra: "by reason whereof," adds the chronicler, "sore calamity came upon them: for they had them to be their enemies and avengers whose custom they followed so earnestly and unto whom they desired to be like in all things. For it is not a light thing to do wickedly against the laws of God; but the time following shall declare these things."

THE PONTIFICATE

1. Its Military and Political Importance.—During the period covered by "the age of the Maccabees", and indeed all through the period of Greek domination, the high priest was the most prominent official figure in the world of Jewish politics. He was to all intents and purposes a sovereign and a prince, a member of state more than a minister of religion. He spent part of his life no doubt performing religious duties—he officiated, for example, on the great day of Atonement, but hardly ever on ordinary occasions; more frequently his duties called him to the palace, to the council chamber, to the military camp, rather than to the temple and the altar.

It is important to remember this unique public character attaching to the office of high priest in the period with which we are dealing; and it is interesting to know how the office, at first so closely associated with purely religious work, came to have this worldly character. This was how it came about. When the Jewish people ceased to have a king of their own and became subject to a foreign power, the Temple and the priesthood began to acquire a position and importance that they had not in earlier and happier times. In the absence of a throne of the house of David, the Temple came to be looked upon as something more than a sacred shrine, and its priests regarded in another light than mere ministers of religion. They became heirs to many rights and privileges formerly invested in the sovereign—among them being the collecting of certain tithes and taxes that used to flow into the royal treasury—and they began to be regarded as the chief representatives of the nation, the guardians of the nation's weal, and the keepers of her honour. In the same way the Temple was not merely God's house of worship and prayer, but the one surviving monument of the people's national life, the last visible memorial of a great historic past. It is true the high priests of former times had always moved in the best circles of society; but in the period with which we are dealing the high-priestly house was the only hereditary family with acknowledged aristocratic claims, and the pontifex himself the chief magistracy of the state. As has been said, "When the high priest stood at the altar in all his princely state, when he poured out the libation amidst the blare of trumpets, and the singers lifted up their voice and all the people fell prostrate in prayer till he descended and raised his hands in blessing, the slaves of the Greek or the Persian forgot for a moment their bondage and knew that the day of their redemption was near. The high priest, at such a moment, seemed to embody all the glory of the nation as the kings had done of old and when the time came to strike a successful blow for freedom, it was a priestly house that led the nation to the victory which united in one person the functions of high priest and prince" (vid. E. Biblica, "Priest" 3846).

As the office of high priest rose in secular importance and increased in power and opulence, it was natural that worldly men should grasp at it, not for any moral and religious influence that still clung to it, but solely for its political splendour and princely revenues. Whenever it happened that the enviable post became vacant, bribery and corruption were regularly resorted to by those interested in the appointment. If at such a time the Syrian exchequer happened to be low, the office of high priest could be counted on as bringing in a goodly price. Yet it would be unjust to insinuate that all the holders of the office at this time were wolves in sheep's clothing although the majority of them were so.

To be continued.

BEACON LIGHTS

For Young Protestants

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor in chief — — — — — The Rev. C. Hanko
Bible Outlines — — — — — The Rev. P. de Boer
Book Review — — — — — The Rev. L. Vermeer

CONTRIBUTORS


All matters relative to the contents should be sent to Rev. C. Hanko, 9900 Kostner Ave., Oaklawn, Ill.

Send all SUBSCRIPTIONS to:

Miss Peternella Poortinga.

Box 195, Lansing, Illinois.