

BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*

NOVEMBER, 1975

WORKING
MOTHERS





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JOY NOW, OR FOREVER?

by Gerald Kuiper

The Beacon Lights Staff would like to welcome Mr. Gerald Kuiper as Associate Editor. He is a member of our Loveland Church. He taught at Hope P.R. School and now he teaches at Loveland. May God bless him in his writings to you the young people.

One of the popular musicals from some years back has an often repeated line which goes as follows:

If you have leisure, follow pleasure:
Let not an hour of joy pass by.

This was the advice given in the musical to the young man of the world. The language of today puts this philosophy more briefly and more provocatively in the form of the bumper sticker - "If it feels good, do it!" Studies have been made and many novels written on the so called pleasure seekers of the day. The wartime uncertainties of the past and the present fear of nuclear extinction, along with the economic uncertainty of today, once again brings the age old saying, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die," back to us today.

Even though the Holy Scriptures tell us, "From such turn away," all of us, whether we will admit it or not, are caught up in this mad pursuit of pleasure and carnal joy. The delight of the roaring "396" and the screaming tires become the most important thing in the life of many of our young men. In fact, many a youth will give up all to buy those wide tires and racing cams. Covenant young people wear the "Love" T-shirts and bracelets along with the pleasure seekers of today. The Cedar Points and Elitches attract many of

us - we find great joy and pleasure in whirling around upside down on a machine, or riding screaming on a roller coaster. Some of us get our joy from the fellowship around four or five six packs of beer, and the subsequent "joke" sessions which invariably follow. Then, of course, there are those who find "joy" with their date by holding hands at the X-rated movie or by attending the weekend rock concerts. And probably the most tragic example is how young men and young women of the church seek pleasure with the wicked, worldly young people who are completely caught up in and committed to this pleasure craze.

Don't misunderstand me, young people. Most of our parents have their televisions, stereo sound systems, and expensive sports equipment. We of the "older generation" are also caught up in the fun of the world. The question we must ask is how our joy and pleasure relates to the Biblical concept of joy - that of giving worthy praise to God in thankfulness for all His benefits to us. The earthly joy of which we have been speaking is that joy of which Job speaks in chapter 20:4-7: "Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens...yet shall he perish like his own dung."

Joy, according to Scripture, is not that carnal pleasure in which we violate every law of God, but on the contrary it has its source in God Himself. Ecclesiastes 2:26 tells us that God gives to those

whom he loves wisdom, knowledge, and joy. We also learn from Scripture that joy is an expression of thankfulness by the child of God **with other children of God.** See II Chronicles 15:25, 29:17, and Ezra 3 and 6 in this connection. Isaiah 52:9 states, "Break forth into joy...for the Lord hath comforted His people." And in Isaiah 12:1-3 we find a similar passage:

And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me. Behold God is my salvation.....Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Sanctified joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit which will find its ultimate expression in perfection in the presence of God. Psalm 16:11 teaches this when the Psalmist confesses, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures forever more." Paul in I Thessalonians 2:19 expresses this same truth when he says, "For what is our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

Is there perhaps a period in our lives - say from age 14 to 21 - when we have the right and must be allowed to seek our own brand of pleasure and joy, when we can for a time live a life of joy apart from God? Is there a time when we leave the sphere of the covenant home and church, and seek our "growth" away from God? Our experience has shown that the words of that song, "To live apart from God is death" is only too true in this respect! Youth is transient. We soon become adults and live the rest of our lives with the memories and sometimes horrible consequences of the sins of our youth. The words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 11:9 and 10 are graphically clear regarding this. Read what he tells us here:

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. Therefore, remove sorrow from thine heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

You all know Ecclesiastes 12:1 which immediately follows the above words. Here we are told, "Remember **now** thy creator in the days of thy youth." This is an urgent command of Jehovah God! Solomon then closes the book with these powerful words:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Covenant young people, there are many of God's people, both young and old, who do not seek the "joy" of the world, who live and die happily in the knowledge that they belong to Jesus Christ. The joy in our hearts too, must be that joy which is expressed as praise and thanksgiving to God. Our lives must be a joyful, living sacrifice to God our Creator and Sustainer. Every moment in our work and our play we are to live **through** Him, and **unto** Him. Let our song not be the songs of earthly pleasure, but let us instead sing these beautiful words:

What shall I render to the Lord
For all His benefits to me?
How shall my soul by grace restored
Give worthy thanks, O Lord, to Thee.

Within His house, the house of prayer,
I dedicate myself to God.
Let all His saints His grace declare
And join to sound His praise abroad.



WORKING MOTHERS

by Esther Kamps

Esther is a member of our Hope Church.

The **Beacon Lights'** staff asked me for a mother's answer to the question: "Should mothers work outside the home?" Having abandoned two previous attempts, I'll try this one last time to answer in such a way as to bring out the principle. I can't, you can't, no one can legislate things that pertain to a Christian conscience. Obviously, a list of vocations (nurse, teacher, etc.), rules, hours, and conditions ("home by three") gets to be pretty silly. Besides, any such man-made catalogues are bound to have exceptions, loopholes, and absurdities built in. What we need is a principle. Namely, what is the calling of the God-fearing mother?

The calling to Motherhood--that is some calling! There probably isn't a more basic and important calling anywhere among God's people. What an office! We Mothers have the honor to be called to nurture the Covenant Seed. And, ah me! it's not easy. It's a "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little" task. It's backwards five and a half steps for every six forwards. It's a thing of patience and faith, of drudgery, of enduring loneliness, of boredom. It's the unremitting, bitter battles with our own selfishness, spiritual apathy, self pity, and our own rebellious and vicious natures. It's a task that demands us to make ourselves the lowest of servants. And, finally, it is a Christ-like calling. For it is He who made Himself of no reputation that He might redeem His Children and bring them to the Father.

May I digress parenthetically here to say--Fathers, pray for us Mothers! How

little you suspect the sin that plagues our hearts. You think us safely tucked away from the world and its temptations. But, oh, how our natures fight against our calling! Ask any woman who expects a child. Ask her how her sinful nature plagues her even as she tries to keep her spiritual eyes on the heavenly goal and the Covenant. Sometimes we are in despair--how can we hope to nurture God's children when we can't even conquer our own rebellious hearts! Fathers and brothers, pray for us Mothers in Israel!

To return to the subject, a Mother's calling is an absurdity to the world. The ungodly can not begin to comprehend even the idea of bringing forth the Covenant Seed, of finding and making one's deepest joy consist of service, loving service, and sacrifice of self for God's sake. The discipline of love, the godly seeking after righteousness in your children, and all such callings of Motherhood are foolishness to the unregenerate heart.

Ironically, the world's mothers often seem to be better mothers. Certainly they have a smaller family to cope for. With worldlings this is considered a virtue. Along with this comes more "peace-and-quiet", more efficient, orderly houses, more healthy, wealthy, glamorous and sometimes fiercely partisan mothers. But these things are an empty shell, a hull without a kernal. The ungodly cannot know their own or their children's sin; they cannot conceive of Repentance. They would say in honeyed tones: "Repentance from what?" Salvation for the worldling could only refer to ease, lack of pain or suffering, and gain of wealth, prestige, or power. As to Communion of the Saints,

the ungodly can only experience a "generation gap" between people who have nothing but their sin and selfishness in common. What about the life of Thankfulness? Look around; you'll find only dissatisfaction. At every checkpoint of the Christian calling it is evident: that inner core, the motive of true Motherhood is simply not present in an ungodly heart. If we do not belong to our faithful Saviour, we are only sham mothers, which is a sobering thought.

Finally and practically, how does the Christian Mother follow her calling, specifically now with regards to the question of working outside the home? Personally, I fail to see any difference between working outside or inside. Whenever ANY work (maybe it's sewing, giving piano lessons, bookkeeping, or answering your husband's business phone) begins to use up the vitality, the store of patience, emotional energy, and just plain time that Mothers before God and for His sake owe to their children--whatever or wherever it takes place--it is wrong. It's wrong no matter what the avowed end is supposed to achieve, be it

tuition payments, bazaar projects "for the school", or just plain money to pay the bills.

I have not said outside jobs are always wrong. Neither have I implied that outside interests cannot be beneficial for both mother and children. But I do insist that whenever a mother steals - even from her own strength - from the nurture of God's children, she is stealing from Him. If a job saps your power, your patience, or your time, or diminishes your power to love, nurture and mother God's children, then drop that job - even if it's your housework. Cut it short. Forget that sinful pride, that wicked obsession. Don't shoo God's little ones off to a T.V. babysitter to keep your carpeting clean, or your kitchen uncluttered. Don't let anything - house, wardrobe, "nerves", pride, let alone greed for luxuries and gadgets - rob you of your precious calling. Your job is a beautiful, Christ-like office to serve humbly, submissively, and often without visible reward. Mothers-in-Christ, let us lay up our treasures in Heaven. May God grant us the grace to do so.

Feature

MOMMY'S AT WORK

by Sue Looyenga

Sue is a member of our First Church

My name is Marcy, and tomorrow I am going to be six years old. I asked my Daddy if I had to go to school, even on my birthday. You probably know what he said - "You can't ever skip school, Marcy, unless you are sick."

Oh, well, I guess it doesn't matter anyway, because there won't be anyone home. Daddy and Mommy have to go to

work, and my little brother Timmy stays at Mrs. Green's house. It's no fun to stay home by yourself.

I wish I could have a birthday party like Betsy, my friend, had last year. But Mommy says she is just too busy for that kind of thing, because she works every day. Daddy and Mommy said that we are going to get a new boat and camper and take a long trip next summer, and that will be a lot more fun than just an old birthday

party.

Yesterday Betsy told me I could come overnight to her house, and her mom would bake me a birthday treat. I can hardly wait to go, because I love to go to Betsy's house.

When Betsy and I come home from school, her mommy is always home. She gives us a big hug and makes us hot chocolate and cookies. Then we play with Betsy's twin sisters until suppertime. I wonder why suppertime always comes so fast at Betsy's house.

When I come home from school. I have to get Timmy from Mrs. Green, our neighbor, and Mrs. Green's daughter Lucy comes to stay with us until Mommy comes home from work. I don't like Lucy, because she watches T.V. all the time and tells us to be quiet when we ask her to play with us. She says daddies and mommies are supposed to play with children - not babysitters.

At Betsy's house, there's always someone to play with us. Betsy's daddy even lets us all sit on his lap at the same time - Betsy and me and the twins - and then he tells us stories about when he was a little boy. When he's all done with his stories, we get to pick our favorite Bible story out, and he tells them without even looking in a Bible Story book!

Sometimes I wish Mommy and Daddy were like Betsy's. I love them, but I never get to sit on Daddy's lap because he's so

tired, and Mommy has so many things to do at night, she doesn't have time for Timmy and me.

One time I asked Daddy how come some mommies worked and some mommies stayed home all day. Daddy said our mommy works so that we can have special things like a boat and a camper and a long trip every summer. He said we wouldn't be happy if we never had special things to do and had to stay home all the time. I told Daddy I think I would rather have a stay-home mommy like Betsy's. Anyway, Betsy is happy and she never went on a trip, or had a boat or a camper or special things.

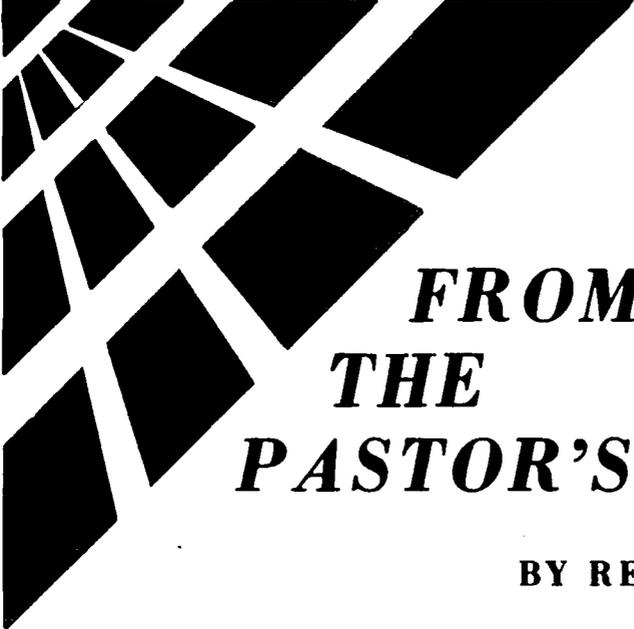
Last time I stayed at Betsy's house, her daddy told us about a man named Job. He said that God took everything away from Job, but Job still had God and still loved Him. Sometimes God makes His Children very poor, but He still gives them special blessings that we can't buy with money.

And then, Betsy's daddy told us that he was rich. I asked him if he made a lot of money where he worked, but he said no, just enough to take care of his family. Then I said, "Then why did you say you are rich?" He told us he was rich because he had two little girls on his lap who loved God and stories about Him. And Betsy's mommy got tears in her eyes and smiled at us.



The abandonment of the name "theology" and the substitution in its room of the name of "science of religion", was nothing but the honest consequence of the fundamentally atheistic point of view which was held.

Abraham Kuyper



**FROM
THE
PASTOR'S STUDY**

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

**THEODIDAKTOI
STONES IN GOD'S TEMPLE OF GRACE**

"And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isaiah 54:13

As arrows in the bow of a mighty man, so are the children of the youth! It is a great boon in the life of God's church to see also these youthful "children" of Zion. I see them in the homes of the Godly parents; I see them in church from the time that they are mere dandlers at their mother's knee till the time that they have passed through the Catechism Classes and come and confess with their mouths what they believe with their hearts. I have seen you walking down the isle and over the platform to receive your "Certificate" of successful completion of the course in Grade School and High School. And you were arrows in the quiver of God Almighty. You have a faith which conquers the world. Wonder-children you are; children of God's covenant mercies.

You are living stones in the temple of God, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone, because you are "Theodidaktoi", taught of God. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is your teacher. He is the Covenant God who has manifested Himself in the flesh in Jesus, God-with-us. Yes, you had many teachers among men; parents, ministers, kindergarten instructors, grade school teachers and high school mentors. These have followed each other in succession. But one teacher followed you with His goodness and mercy in every class-room. He was never tardy, He was never unprepared, and He was always an effective teacher!

The Lord God did more than **educate** you. He **instructed** you according to His plan of building the spiritual temple. He

instructed you and me in such a way that He chastened us, struck us down, did not spare His rod of correction. He so taught us that we are taught of God. We thus become His very workmanship, His "poieema" (poem) prepared unto every good word. He was the potter and you were the clay. He fashioned you a beautiful stone in His temple of grace according to the sure word of prophecy which He spoke by the mouth of Isaiah to Israel in Babylon. He was fulfilling His word of prophecy when your minister, parents and teachers were instructing you. He was putting "structure" in you when He instructed you. He put in you the structure of the truth of the Gospel. And He realizes His comforting word to Zion in captivity, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and will lay thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones". Is. 54:11,12.

When the Lord God instructed you, you learned to know God, because you were known of God. What a beautiful relationship between this great Teacher-God and His instructed children. He placed you and me in the school-room of Jesus and we must learn from him, that he is meek and lowly of heart and we find rest for our souls. (Matt. 11:29) When you learn from God in Jesus then the heavenly Father has drawn you with cords of love. It is an irresistible drawing in which you are made very willing and obedient to the Lord. The beauty of holiness is yours. Sometimes the Lord leads us through the school of "hard knocks" to teach us the lessons we failed to learn in the formal classroom. These hard knocks are not really a teacher. God remains the teacher. But he polishes us and works us down to a beautiful stone in his temple. We are then taught of God by His Word and Spirit.

The Lord had to **instruct** you. You needed much more than education. There

was not much to lead out of you. You did not have much content in your mind, did you when you started school? But the Lord places His thoughts in our mind. He points out His creation to us, be it reading, writing or arithmetic. It is all His grand design which we are studying in the light of His Word, He builds us up in the knowledge of His will. He does not simply fill your head with some facts, but he speaks to your heart, mind, soul and requires all your strength. He makes you His **Theodidaktoi**, God-taught-ones.

The church at Thessalonica did not need that any one should teach them concerning showing love to strangers, says Paul. These children of God were taught of God. They are drawn by God's marvelous love into the communion of saints.

And when we are thus instructed of God we have great peace. It is the blessed fruit of the Spirit connected with joy of salvation. It means being delivered from ignorance, sin, guilt and fear of the wrath of God. It dispels the many, many problems which sin breeds.

Yes, I see you walking with your diploma of Certificate. It is a great occasion in your life. And it is something different from the graduation of the children of the world. These are not stones in the temple of God, living stones, king-priests of God. They are educated sinners; you are instructed sinful saints. You are stones in fair colors, and as a city whose foundations are laid in sapphires. You are established in righteousness, young people.

When one is thus taught of God he will keep on learning, learning the ways of the Lord throughout life. You have not yet attained to this fully being taught of God. You have not come yet to the full measure of this joy and peace. I write you, young people, that your joy and peace may be full. There is much sin which must be mortified yet in our members. Paul runs the race to attain unto the perfection of

the upward calling in Christ Jesus.

But the Lord God is faithful. The instruction which He hath begun in us He will finish it even unto the day of Jesus Christ. Then the entire temple of God will stand forth in all its beauty. The foundation of the wall of the city will be garnished with all manner of precious stones. No, there will be no temple there such as was in the days of Solomon. But the church will be there, the temple of the

living God built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It will be the dwelling-place of God in the Spirit. A Spirit-filled church to whom none need to say: know the Lord. For they shall all know Him; for the knowledge of God shall fill the earth even as the waters cover the bottom of the sea.

Blessed stones in God's living temple. **Theodidaktoi.**

This is the first of a series of articles by Prof. Hanko about the life and works of Rev. George M. Ophoff. Future articles will appear in subsequent issues of Beacon Lights. Ed.

George M. Ophoff

by Prof. H. Hanko

The history of the church of Jesus Christ on earth is the history of particular men. This is not because the church belongs to men, or, less yet, because the affairs of the church are in the hands and under the control of men. Christ is the head of His church. From His position in glory, He executes all the will of God. He does this sovereignly so that nothing at all happens without His will and outside His powerful control. In the words of our own precious Heidelberg Catechism, Christ "from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life." (Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 21, Q. and A. 54.) All that happens to the church is the work of Christ.

But Christ uses men. There is something miraculous about this. For the men whom Christ uses are nothing else but mere men. They are men of distinct personalities with individual foibles and quirks of character. They are men who are not always the most pleasant and agreeable. They are, above all, sinful men.

Apart from the work of grace, they are as sinful as any men that ever lived. Their regeneration and conversion and sanctification, while it makes them men of God and saints in the church, nevertheless does not free them yet from the same sinful nature which is the burden of all God's people. Even in the work of the church, they are not perfect. They have only a small beginning of the new obedience. They also confess, along with the rest of God's people, that their best works are corrupted and polluted by sin. Their sins enter into their work--also their work within the church of Jesus Christ. They do the work given them, but they do this work with all their shortcomings, all their weaknesses, all their transgressions of the holy law of God, a necessary part of their task. It would seem that the work of the church could never be carried out by such men. It would seem that sinful people would always spoil the work of Christ and make that work non-effective. For, after all, the work of the gathering, defense and preservation of the church is a most holy work. It involves nothing less

than the salvation of the elect and redeemed people of God. It involves nothing less than the preservation of the cause of Christ and His truth in the world. It involves the shepherding of Christ's sheep. It involves the preservation of these sheep and their spiritual preparation for the perfection of heaven. Such a holy task, it would seem, cannot be carried on by sinful men.

Yet it is. This is a most astonishing fact. For the work which Christ himself performs is sometimes performed in spite of these sinful men; it is often performed in such a way that even their sins are turned for good in the cause of the church; it is always performed through them.

But we must not be misled into thinking that therefore, after all, the work of the church is a cooperative venture between Christ and the men who labor on behalf of the cause of Christ. It is not that way. These very men are Christ's instruments. They are completely Christ's instruments. They are such, often beyond their own ability to understand this. Luther, e.g., often spoke of being carried forward by a power greater than himself, which he could not even understand. So it always is. These men are chosen by God already from all eternity. They are chosen as distinct individuals with their own peculiar characters and personalities, with their own individual gifts and powers. It is determined for them by God from all eternity, that they should make their appearance on the scene of history at God's appointed time and in God's appointed place and in the midst of circumstances which are sovereignly determined by Him Who rules over all. They are saved by sovereign grace. They are appointed to a place in the church by divine appointment. They are assigned their work by Christ with an assignment which cannot be rejected, which must be and is carried out; for they are impelled in all their labors by the power of the Lord and King of the church.

There is a wisdom about this which defies understanding. God knows what kind of man is needed for what kind of task in any given moment in history. He knows this perfectly and never makes any mistakes. So, at the proper time in history, at exactly the correct moment in the ongoing stream of the church's life, God places men who are, in all their spiritual, physical and psychological make-up, exactly fitted for precisely the work the Lord wants them to do. They are the right men at the right moment--not by fortuitous fate, but by wisdom, a wisdom that transcends our earthly understanding.

To do any reading at all in the history of the church of Christ is to be impressed with the perfect accuracy of the judgment of God in this respect. To mention but a few of those whom history cherishes and whose memories have been kept alive in the minds and hearts of the saints: there was the aged Polycarp who literally loved not his life unto death in the fierce days of persecution by Rome's Caesars. There was the noble Athanasius who suffered exile no less than five times, who sometimes seemed to stand all alone in the battle of the truth when the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ was repeatedly attacked. There was Augustine, brought out of immorality and pagan religion, to combat the horrible heresy of Pelagius and to lay the groundwork of the salvation of the elect by sovereign grace. There was Gottschalk who raised a lonely voice of protest against Roman Catholic error as he rotted in prison in defense of the truth of double predestination. And who of us does not know of Luther, of Calvin, of Knox, and all the other reformers who stood against the might of Rome to bring the church back to the truth of the Scriptures?

But each was a different kind of man; and yet, just because he was different, he was perfectly suited for the work which had been assigned to him. The work which each did was beyond doubt a work which

could not possibly have been done without Christ Who does His work in gathering, defending and preserving His church against the gates of hell. These men were sinners. They themselves would be the first to confess it. They were also heroes of faith. They were stalwart men of God. They feared no one but God Himself. They were courageous with a courage which staggers the imagination. They loved the truth with a love which led them into the

gravest dangers which men could face. They looked at these dangers with unflinching face. They would not compromise nor sacrifice the truth. They would not turn back in the day of battle. They accomplished the impossible. Because they feared God, they feared no man. And they did this because Christ uses men. The history of the church is the history of such men.



MARTYRS OF ANTIQUITY*

by Duane Alsum

Hebrews 11 is a biography of the saints of old. Men and women gave up the treasures of this life for that which was not yet seen. By faith these saints of the Old Testament lived, suffering afflictions with the people of God, rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. (verse 25)

From the Bible stories heard as children, from the sermons we have heard preached in our churches, and from the discussion with friends in societies, the lives of the Old Testament fathers and mother we can easily recall. The same is not always true in regard to those saints

who lived after the time of the writing of the Scriptures.

As in the Old Testament, men since that time have, "suffered torture, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." (v. 35) Even as the Apostle Paul calls men to walk as he walked, (Philippians 3:17) following his and others examples of faith, so also must we do the same. Numerous accounts are given us of saints whose lives are a tribute to Paul's command.

"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;... They wandered in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth." (Hebrews 11:37,38b)

The cruel treatment of the children of God described here in Hebrews is

*The information presented in this article has been drawn from Foxe's **Christian Martyrs of the World**, unless otherwise indicated.

matched and often surpassed by future enemies of Christ. Already in the first century, after Christ's death on the cross, we find that the tortures inflicted upon Christians are as terrible as the minds of men, inspired by the devil, can invent.

During the reign of Nero, the sixth Roman emperor, that which is known as the "first general persecution of the Christians" began. It is said of this emperor, that he "fiddled while Rome burned." This same man is credited with the death of his wife and mother.

Anger and hatred directed at the emperor was diverted by false accusations against the Christians. Accusing them of burning the city of Rome, Nero gave orders to hunt them out, slay and torture them in such a variety of horrible ways, that their tormentors often joined them rather than carry out their orders. Christians were placed in the skins of wild animals and then attacked by dogs until they died. Especially cruel, and revealing the character of this Nero, were his "torches". Men and women were coated with pitch, placed upon poles, and burned to provide light for Nero's gardens.

It is also at this time that the "catacombs" became prominent. They were long tunnels where slaves had been employed by the Romans to cut out stone in which to build the city. In these recesses of the earth, Christians could gather for the preaching of the Word, and partake of the sacraments in safety. As has been the case throughout our history, Christianity has thrived and grown under persecution. Having experienced the peace and the joys of believing, despite the cruelty of the age, believers spread the good news of the Gospel, often at the expense of their own lives.

Coliseums were built by the evil Roman emperors. Within the walls of these buildings, hundreds of Christians were brought to suffer death in some of its most terrible forms. Popularity of the emperor rested upon his ability to procure

the greatest amount of such death. Despite the near unbelievable, coldbloodedness of their assailants the Christians often met their death with cheerful countenances. Reflecting upon the growth of Christianity, it is proper that we view these tortures also as a means whereby God brings the weary and heavy laden to rest.

The "second and third persecution" of the Christians took on much the same form as that begun by the evil Nero. History records the beheading of Dionysius the Areopagite, then bishop of Athens, taking place at this time. His name is made known to us in the seventeenth chapter of Acts, which also records the account of Paul's speaking to the Athenians of THE UNKNOWN GOD.

"The fourth persecution" began under Marcus Aurelius in the year 163 A.D. Marcus Aurelius was the stoic philosopher, whose "Meditations" unlearned men have unwittingly compared with Christian thought.

Polycarpus, bishop of Smyrna, had sat at the feet of John, the beloved disciple. For sixty years he had served in the ministry of Christ. The martyrdom of this aged man, then in his eighty-sixth year, is told us by ancient historians.*

An angry mob called for the life of this old man, whom they saw as the source of much Christian activity. A military squad was sent to deliver him into the hands of the Asian proconsul. This man taking pity upon the aged Polycarpus attempted to persuade him to reject Christ and swear to the divinity of Caesar. Asked of the proconsul to say, "Away with the atheists" (a name given to Christians), Polycarpus solemnly pointed his hands at the pagan crowd and said, "Away with the atheists."

The proconsul continued to press him to give up his belief. His reply came in the form of a noble confession. "Eighty-six
I. F.F. Bruce, M.A., D.D., **The Spreading Flame.**, page 174-175

years have I served Him, and he has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my Savior and King?" Polycarpus was burned at the stake.

The next six persecutions were all carried out by the Roman empire. So great was the growth of Christianity at this time, that Tertullian tells us that had all the Christians left the Roman territories, the Roman empire would have been seriously weakened.

The means of death at the hands of the Romans was varied for the martyrs. Some were beheaded, some stoned, some stabbed with hot irons, some drowned, some starved, some killed by cold, some

killed by cutting off their limbs, and the list goes on. Yet, despite the terrible cruelty of their tormentors, so great was the power of God in His saints, they were able to praise His name unto the end.

Oh! What comfort must have been found in Paul's words to the Hebrews. (12:2) "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Then indeed must they have looked upon their suffering as a blessing for Christ's sake.

Contribution

Young People read this article of an old person who attended the 50th anniversary celebration. Take to heart what the experience of an older person is saying. Grow! Prepare!

Ed.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF OUR FIELD DAY:

Some memories left an unforgettable impression upon me. I would like to reflect once more upon our celebration as a denomination of our fiftieth anniversary. As we came into the park, to see such a large group of our own people - children, middle-aged, and older people were all there, along with a happy greeting of old friends visiting new ones - it was indeed a precious welcome. Beside this, the Lord gave us a very beautiful sunshiny day in nature, which was quite an addition. There prevailed such an informal, congenial spirit, as if we were all belonging to one large family. The singing in the open air was terrific; there was an organ, a piano, and a trumpet. The committee had taken care of all details, which added to the festal occasion. The lectures given all

pointed to the one central theme of God's Covenant Faithfulness; even the Psalms we sang were very fitting and in harmony with the same theme. Oh, how you could wish to extend such a celebration a little longer, as the Jewish people did sometimes in days of old, even for an extra seven days. (Lev. 24)

Remember the last Thursday evening in Calvin's Fine Arts Auditorium? That large auditorium was almost filled. That was the lecture given by Prof. H. Hanko, I believe, on the Future Manifestation. Several talented youths gave of their best, and then we all sang together, being led by Mr. E. Ophoff. What a volume! I thought the roof might come down.

Well, all in all, it was tremendous, and I received a new appreciation of our

young people, as they gathered constantly with us, also attending the lectures. Yes, we need that: young and old together, growing in the knowledge of God's Word, and particularly in the truth as we may confess it.

You young people will soon take the place of our older generation. Therefore, prepare yourselves constantly to discern the lie which is propagated today around us in many churches. Continue to stand firmly on that sure foundation whereof Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. Only then can we expect the promise of God's blessing upon us. As the shadows of spiritual darkness are becoming more visible, may we all strive to cling together

against the onslaught of the wicked one.

Well, the last meeting came to a close. Then we sang "God Be With You - Till We Meet Again", and the separation had to come. It was now over. Slowly each one moved out of his seat; a handshake here and there, a good wish of hoping to see each other again, and our festive day was ended.

Ended - but not forgotten; and the memory rings back in my ear when I listen to the cassette. It leaves me with this thought: What will Heaven be? With the saints of all ages we shall gather and rejoice in this same truth we now confess!

God's Covenant Faithfulness will then forever be realized! Yes, Eternally!

Contribution

Young People's Place in the Church

by Robert Looyenga

Bob is a member of our First Church

What place do we as young people have in the church? Have you ever thought about this question? Have you ever come to a conclusion?

Do we as young people just tail along with our parents to church, because they make us or because it is traditional, because ever since we were young we were taught to go to church twice every Sunday? Do we as young people think we aren't as important as the elders and deacons, or let's say the pastor?

This last paragraph can be summed up by saying...God forbid!

We as young people are the church of tomorrow. We can't just tail along with our parents to church, or just go because of tradition. We have to go to church because we want to go. To get a better understanding of God's Word and to strengthen our faith for when we as young people get older and take physical positions in the church. We are going to have to be strong in the faith, because times are getting rougher and rougher to

hear God's Word. We as young people should go to church with the intention of getting a blessing from one of God's servants.

How should we prepare ourselves for the future? There is no better way to prepare ourselves than to go to church to hear God's Word preached. But there are other ways to prepare ourselves, aren't there? We as young people could prepare more for society meetings. More would be understood if we as young people would study ahead the passage to be discussed in society. Here again, you should not be in society, if your parents are making you go. More then likely you won't get anything out of it, and you will be wasting your time.

We as young people have a place of utter importance in the church of today. Almost every sermon should be and is especially beneficial to us. This does not mean our parents can't benefit from it, I am not saying that. What I am trying to point out in this article is that we as young people are the most important factors of

the church. For we are the church of tomorrow. We have to bring up our families in the fear of God's Name. For they will then take over the church when we reach the age of death.

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble

yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (I Peter 5:5-9)

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Karla Kalsbeek

FROM OUR SOUTH HOLLAND CHURCH:

The membership papers of Miss Alvina Van Maanen have been received from our Hull, Iowa Church.

Mr. George DeJong and Miss Denise Flikkema were united in marriage on September 26.

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

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

FROM OUR HOLLAND CHURCH:

The membership papers of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Kamphuis and four baptized sons have been received from our Hope Church.

Miss Betty Woltjer and Mr. Glenn Kotman were united in marriage on September 19.

FROM OUR HULL CHURCH:

Mr. & Mrs. Leon Uittenbogaard were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Kathy Jo, born September 26.

On October 9, Prof. Hanko spoke for a combined chapel exercise of our Edgerton and Doon schools.

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