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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:  
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;  
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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## MEDITATION

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

—Exodus 14:13–18

**S**tand still.

Those words are pure grace. The grace of those words is so pure and rich and bright and deep and high and broad and wide that a poor sinner's heart can only weep in solemn and joyful wonder at the grace of his God, who speaks such gracious words to him. For consider that these words of pure grace were spoken by God to the most impure sinners. They were spoken to the children of Israel, who had lifted up their eyes and seen death marching after them. They were spoken to the children of Israel, who were sore afraid with unbelief. Children of Israel, who preferred to be in the hellish bondage of Egypt rather than with Jehovah in the wilderness. Wretched children! Impure children! Why did not God smite them all with blindness for looking to Egypt and not to him? Why did he not smite them all dead, for that matter? They certainly deserved it. As do you! As do I! What business does God have speaking to people such as this?

But listen a moment, for God will speak to those very people who are sore afraid with unbelief. Here is what he says: "Fear ye not. Stand still."

Pure grace! Pure grace that fills our hearts to the brim and our eyes to overflowing.

But what does it mean to stand still? That too is pure grace. To stand still means that the

children of Israel would be bystanders as Jehovah went to work. Tremendous things had to be accomplished. The mightiest army in the world, enemy of the people of God, had to be destroyed to the last man. The water of the Red Sea had to be parted, and the path of dry ground through its midst must be laid. The children of Israel, murmuring in unbelief a moment ago, must be cleansed of all their sin and reconciled to their covenant God. All of these great things must be accomplished. Much work must be done! And what would Israel's contribution to all of this be? This: "Stand still." This: "Hold your peace." Israel's work would be to do no work. Israel's contribution would be to make no contribution but only to receive.

Stand still, Israel, for your salvation is of Jehovah. Who would save the people from their sin? Jehovah. Who would wipe out the Egyptians so that they would be seen no more forever? Jehovah. Who would divide the sea and make a path for his people? Jehovah. Stand still, Israel, for Jehovah shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. Pure grace.

Now come, and let us go from the red sea to the Red Sea. That is, let us go from the type to the reality. Let us watch Jehovah cleanse his people of their sin. Let us go, then, to that hill outside Jerusalem with a cross planted upon it. Let us behold the man dying there, from whose

wounds flow the Red Sea of his blood. It is Jesus. It is the savior. There we must stand still. There is nothing for us to contribute, nothing for us to do. We are bystanders as Jehovah fights for us against all our sin and death by visiting that sin

and death upon his only begotten Son. With his stripes we are healed. Pure grace. Pure grace!

Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.

—AL

## BOOK REVIEW

### Singing God's Songs in a New Land

“Singing God’s Songs in a New Land: Congregational Song in the RCA and CRC.” Harry Boonstra. In *A Goodly Heritage: Essays in Honor of the Reverend Dr. Elton J. Bruins at Eighty*. Jacob E. Nyenhuis, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007. 468 pages, hardcover, \$18.98. [Reviewed by Rev. Andrew Lanning]

**A** *Goodly Heritage* is a festschrift for Elton J. Bruins. Bruins was a longtime religion professor at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. After his retirement from teaching, Bruins served as the founding director of Hope College’s A. C. Van Raalte Institute. Bruins would probably be most familiar to readers of *Reformed Pavilion* as a coauthor of the book *Family Quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Churches of the 19th Century*, which book traces the line of Dutch Reformed churches from which many readers of *Reformed Pavilion* are descended. In 2007 Bruins’ colleagues, former students, and friends presented him with a collection of fifteen essays at the occasion of his eightieth birthday. The essays range widely over those topics to which Bruins devoted his life: church history, theology, studies of Albertus C. Van Raalte, and Hope College. Those fifteen essays, along with some introductory and biographical material, make up the content of *A Goodly Heritage*. Bruins passed away exactly four years ago today, March 23, 2020, at the age of 92.<sup>1</sup>

Although *A Goodly Heritage* has several chapters that are worthwhile, this review will focus only on the first chapter, “Singing God’s Songs in a New Land: Congregational Song in the RCA and CRC,” written by Harry Boonstra. Readers of *Reformed Pavilion* will undoubtedly find the title of that chapter to be irresistible, as it was irresistible for the undersigned. *Reformed Pavilion* was born out of a controversy over “congregational song,” so it will be of some interest to us what the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and Christian Reformed Church (CRC) have done in the matter of congregational song.

Boonstra’s chapter in *A Goodly Heritage* briefly recounts the history of the various songbooks officially adopted by the RCA and the CRC for use in their worship services. Having begun with the background in the Netherlands, Boonstra proceeds to tell the story of the many psalmbooks and hymnbooks adopted by the RCA through the years, after which he tells the story of the few psalters and psalter hymnals that the CRC adopted through the years. A catalog of old songbooks might sound tedious, but the material is quite lively, and the reader will find that he has finished the twenty-nine pages of the chapter with his interest intact.

Boonstra’s purpose in his chapter was purely historical. He intended his article to be “a comparative study of congregational song in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the

<sup>1</sup> The exact timing of this article with the anniversary of Bruins’ death was not intentional. In God’s providence Pavilion Christian School in West Michigan had a snow day yesterday, during which time the undersigned “randomly” pulled this book off the shelf to prepare an article for publication today. Imagine my surprise at discovering the exact anniversary. With God nothing is random.

Christian Reformed Church (CRC)” (1). As a purely historical comparison, Boonstra does not enter into an evaluation of the RCA’s and CRC’s congregational song. Boonstra sets down an account of what the RCA has sung and what the CRC has sung but does not argue the rightness or wrongness of what they have sung. Boonstra’s conclusion focuses on process: RCA synods did not strictly investigate or regulate which hymnbooks were being used in the denomination, whereas CRC synods only adopted new hymnbooks after years of study and investigation. Boonstra’s conclusion also focuses on culture: RCA churches were influenced in their songbooks by constant contact over many centuries with other American denominations, whereas the CRC was more isolationist in outlook and Dutch in character.

By focusing on process and culture, Boonstra misses what this reviewer considers to be a more interesting and profitable question about the RCA’s and CRC’s congregational song through the years: Was it right? That is, were the RCA and the CRC worshiping God as he requires in his word, or were they departing from God’s word in order to worship in some other way than he has required? That this question is profitable and interesting is evident from the fact that the denominations themselves had to wrestle with that question at those moments when they decided to introduce hymns alongside the psalms.

Boonstra seems to take it for granted that expanding the church’s songbook to include hymns is good. Although Boonstra does not argue the point, he does tip his hand. For example, the title of his chapter is “Singing God’s Songs in a New Land,” where “God’s songs” refer not only to the psalms sung in days of old in the RCA and the CRC but also to the profusion of hymns that the denominations have introduced through the years. If the title is correct, the hymns as well as the psalms are all God’s songs for the church to sing in her worship. For another example, Boonstra lists some of the arguments that churches have made for incorporating hymns, but he does not list the arguments for exclusive psalmody. For yet another example,

Boonstra closes his chapter with a personal testimony of the blessing that the then-latest joint RCA-CRC hymnbook has been to his congregation of Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Nevertheless, in spite of this weakness in the chapter, the reader will find much that is interesting and much from which he can draw his own conclusions. How about some examples to whet the appetite?

First, Boonstra’s chapter reinforces the historical fact that the Reformed churches were psalm-singing churches from the very beginning. In fact, Boonstra reports that “the Reformed churches had largely been exclusively psalm singers” (2). The Reformed churches followed the lead of John Calvin in their psalmody.

Calvin taught that Reformed congregations should sing only the 150 Psalms of David (and a few other biblically based texts, such as the Ten Commandments and the Song of Simeon), and he was largely responsible for having these psalms translated into French versified form, and to have tunes (125 for the 150 psalms) composed for these versifications; since most of this work was accomplished in Geneva, this began to be called the Genevan Psalter, with the final and complete edition published in 1562. (5)

To sing psalms in worship is to be Reformed in worship. To the degree that churches depart from the psalms and to the degree that churches fight against the principle of singing psalms, to that degree churches depart from Reformed worship.

Second, Boonstra’s chapter reveals that both the RCA and the CRC were psalm-singing churches from their beginnings. The Dutch immigrants who formed the RCA carried the psalmody of the Netherlands with them to America. Already in 1628, less than ten years after the conclusion of the Synod of Dordt, Dutch immigrants established the first Reformed Protestant Dutch Church (RPDC, later to become the RCA) in New Amsterdam, New York

(present-day New York City). Boonstra describes what these and subsequent immigrants clutched in their hands as they came to the new world.

The immigrants came to New York and New Jersey with their Dutch Bibles (first published in 1637) and their *Psalmboek*, which also contained the Calvinist creeds of the church and the liturgical forms. These documents thoroughly shaped the life of the RPDC. The heavy hand of the Amsterdam classis, the sermons in Dutch, the adherence to the predestination theology of the Canons of Dort, the practice of singing psalms instead of hymns—these factors were the glue that kept the RPDC together, but also became major sources of controversy and division. (4)

Although the CRC had its beginnings in America more than two hundred years later, the CRC was also a psalm-singing denomination from the start. In fact, one of the CRC's main reasons for establishing herself as separate from the RCA was the RCA's use of hymns. By 1850, when Van Raalte's newly-immigrated Dutchmen in Michigan joined with the long-established RCA in America, the RCA had added many hymns to her worship. Boonstra tells the story:

The CRC story begins with the Reverend Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte and his followers coming to America in 1846. In 1849 the RCA invited the immigrants to join their fellowship, and the following year the immigrant congregations joined the RCA as a separate Classis of Holland. The union of 1850, however, was soon challenged. Critics among the new immigrants charged that the RCA was not sufficiently known, and that the immigrant congregations had not been consulted about joining the denomination. Moreover, these critics also found practices and teachings in the RCA that could not pass theological muster. The criticism that

concerns us most here was the accusation that the RCA had published “a collection of eight hundred hymns, introduced contrary to the church order”—no doubt a reference to the Church Order of Dort. (17)

The beginning years of both the RCA and the CRC were glorious years. Although they were very hard years for the flesh, they were good years for faith. To the degree that the RCA and the CRC—and their ecclesiastical heirs—have departed from psalmody in their worship, those churches have departed from the old paths of their formation.

Third, Boonstra's chapter reveals that both the RCA and the CRC came to a point in their respective histories when they departed from the psalmody of their fathers and introduced hymns. The RCA turned away from its heritage in 1787, when that year's synod appointed a committee to prepare a better psalter in English than the denomination presently had. The synod of 1787 also mandated that English hymns be added to the new songbook. Boonstra tells the tale; and, though Boonstra himself is not an exclusive psalmodist, he somewhat colorfully imagines the reaction of the stalwarts of Dordt to this obvious departure from their Church Order.

The synodical mandate continued: “Since it is regarded necessary that some well-composed spiritual hymns be connected as a supplement with this new Psalm-Book, it is ordained that the committee have care over this matter, and print such hymns in connection with the Psalms.” Perhaps the fathers of the Dort Church Order did a double take in their celestial home: “What happened to our edict about singing ‘only the 150 Psalms of David?’” A similar disapproval was voiced some two hundred years later. When Howard G. Hageman, dean of liturgical studies in the RCA, reviewed the history of RPDC psalmody and hymnody, he was less than enthusiastic when he came to 1787. The clause about adding “well-composed spiritual hymns” made Hageman sigh,

“So far as can be determined, this abandonment of the historical Reformed principle of using only the Psalter in worship was carried without a single dissenting vote.” (8)

The 1789 psalter hymnal that resulted from the 1787 decision included one hundred hymns. From 1628 to 1789 the RCA had been a psalm-singing denomination. In 1787 the RCA sold her Reformed birthright of psalmody for the thin pottage of hymnody.

In the CRC the decision to introduce hymns came in 1928, a mere four years after Herman Hoeksema and what would become the Protestant Reformed Churches had been expelled from the CRC.<sup>2</sup> The last gasp of psalmody in the CRC had come in 1926, when synod “tried to reassert the psalms-only tradition by ordering explicitly that the reprinting of the Psalter be without hymns” (20). But by Synod 1928 the battle for psalmody was lost in the CRC. Synod declared, “Synod does, from the point of view of principle, not object to the introduction of hymns” (21). Synod also instructed a study committee “that should a sufficient number of suitable hymns be found, the Committee shall not only submit the same to the Synod of 1930, but shall also publish its report six months in advance of that Synod, together with the text of the hymns” (21). Synod 1930 approved the addition of 138 hymns of man to stand alongside the 150 psalms of David, all of which were published in the CRC’s 1934 Psalter Hymnal.

The CRC faced one final obstacle: article 69 of the Church Order of Dordt. Article 69 requires the church to sing psalms: “In the churches only the 150 psalms of David...shall be sung.” Since the time of the Synod of Dordt, article 69 has allowed the smallest handful of canonical songs and hymns in addition to the psalms as a concession to the people, with whom those songs were apparently very popular. However, the CRC recognized very well that article 69 required

psalms. Therefore, Synod 1932 changed the article to read in part,

In the churches...the collection of Hymns for Church use, approved and adopted by Synod, shall also be sung. However, while the singing of the Psalms in divine services is a requirement, the use of the approved Hymns is left to the freedom of the Churches. (21–22)

From 1857 to 1934 the Christian Reformed Church had been a psalm-singing denomination. In 1934 the CRC left the fountain of living water in the psalms and hewed out for herself the broken cistern of man’s hymns.

Fourth, Boonstra’s chapter reveals that once the RCA and CRC opened the door to hymns, they could never close it again. The introduction of one hundred hymns or so at first led to the introduction of countless hymns since. In the RCA some leaders were alarmed at the looseness with which songs and songbooks were introduced into the worship of the RCA.

Although Synod lamented the presence of too many hymn books in the denomination, and acknowledged the lack of denominational involvement in producing their own song books, the practice continued. As late as 1938 the Synod approved four additional “outside” hymnals. (13)

In the CRC as well, the introduction of 141 hymns in the 1934 Psalter Hymnal led to the approval of 405 hymns for the 1987 Psalter Hymnal. In addition to the approved hymns, it seems that individual congregations in both the RCA and CRC have felt free to introduce their own hymns and hymnals for worship, with or without denominational approval. Witness the language of the CRC Synod of 1977: “the proliferation of hymnals containing songs which are un-Reformed in doctrine, lacking in musical quality now being used in many of our churches” (24).

<sup>2</sup> Before 1928 there were individual classes within the CRC that were granted special exemptions to sing hymns that had historically been a part of their worship before they joined the CRC. Thus the CRC had already lost the principle of psalmody as early as 1884, but the loss of that principle would be established for the denomination by Synod 1928.

The proliferation of hymns exposes the conceit of man, who imagines that he is capable of embracing the fiery embers of hymns in his bosom without being burned. Man is shockingly short-sighted. A generation arises of men who imagine that they are wise enough to depart from the old paths of psalmody and forge a new way of hymnody without driving the church into spiritual disaster. When the church invites man to ruin her worship, let not the church be surprised when man ruins her worship.

Fifth, those who use the 1912 Psalter will find an interesting couple of pages recounting the CRC's involvement in the project of producing that psalter. The 1912 Psalter lasted only twenty years in the CRC. She adopted it in 1914 as her songbook and by 1934 had left it for her new Psalter Hymnal, although the CRC did incorporate some of the 1912 Psalter into her 1934 Psalter Hymnal. The 1912 Psalter lived on outside of the CRC in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Interestingly, Boonstra enters into a brief critique of the 1912 Psalter in order to highlight the difficulty of versifying psalms. The critique may be profitable for readers of *Reformed Pavilion* in light of this magazine's book reviews of the 1912 Psalter and the 1650 Scottish Metrical Version.<sup>3</sup>

Let me briefly comment on Psalm 22 as one example that exhibits some of these issues [with versification in the 1912 Psalter]. Number 47 covers verses 1–23 in eleven stanzas, and has the title, “The Cross of Calvary.” The versification is satisfactory, although the bulls of Bashan, the dogs, lions, and wild oxen of Scripture have been lumped together as “beasts of prey.” Number 48 covers verses 22–31 in eight stanzas, of which stanzas 5–8 are repeated in number 49, but with a different tune. The designation “the Lord of lords and King of kings” is imported from the New Testament. Number 50, titled “The Dominion

of Jesus Christ,” paraphrases selected verses from verses 22–31, including the line “A faithful Church shall serve Him.” Number 51, “Witness-Bearing and Grateful Praise,” is better known in (older) CRC circles as “Amid the Thronging Worshipers,” as it was carried over into the 1934, 1959, and 1987 *Psalter Hymnals*. Here “Jehovah” and “the Lord” are not (obviously) identified with Jesus Christ. (19)

Sixth, the most important thing about the psalms is that the psalms are the songs of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ wrote the psalms by his Spirit (II Sam. 23:1–2). Jesus Christ sang the psalms during his earthly life (Matt. 26:30). Jesus Christ commissioned his apostles to require the psalms for the New Testament church's worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Jesus Christ sings the psalms with his brethren today in the midst of the congregation by his word and Spirit (Ps. 22:22, 25; Heb. 2:12).

The truth that the psalms are the songs of Christ does several things. First, that truth opens up the psalms to the believer. For example, knowing that the psalms are the songs of Christ, the believer can finally understand the reward of righteousness in Psalm 18:20–26. God rewarded Christ because of Christ's clean hands and pure heart! Second, the truth that the psalms are the songs of Christ opens up Christ to the believer. For example, knowing that the psalms are the songs of Christ, the believer is given a glimpse in Psalm 22:14 of the horror of Christ's suffering. Christ was poured out like water, and his heart melted like wax in the midst of his bowels. Third, the truth that the psalms are the songs of Christ reveals the grace of God in giving to the believer all the things of Christ. God gives Christ's life, Christ's righteousness, Christ's Spirit, Christ's inheritance, Christ's anointing, Christ's truth, and all the unsearchable riches of Christ to the believer by faith. Included in all those things of Christ that

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Lanning, “The Psalter,” *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 12 (July 1, 2023): 5–18; “Scottish Metrical Version of the Psalms (1650),” *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 47 (March 2, 2024): 4–22.



God gives to the believer are Christ's songs. The believer has the privilege of God's grace through faith to sing the songs of Christ with Christ. In Christ the believer sings the songs of Christ with Christ. What grace! Fourth, the truth that the psalms are the songs of Christ makes the believer desire to sing psalms with all his heart. It is not the law that makes the believer sing psalms, although the law requires that the believer sing psalms. It is not fear or conditions or merit that makes the believer sing psalms, and there is no condition or merit in singing psalms. Rather, the believer desires to sing psalms—and cannot tolerate the introduction of a single hymn to replace those psalms—because the psalms are the songs of Christ!

Yes, the most important thing about the psalms is that they are the songs of Christ. Although Boonstra does not mention this fact, it nevertheless presses itself upon the reader's mind in one particular place in the chapter. Boonstra is discussing the CRC's 1987 Psalter Hymnal, and he reports that the psalter hymnal used updated language. In the midst of Boonstra's examples, the CRC's accidental but glaring denial of Jesus leaps off the page.

The feature of the new hymnal that was in some ways the most noteworthy (and controversial) was the change in the language of existing hymns. One change concerned archaic language. The *thees*, *thous*, and *thines* referring to both God and persons were virtually all eliminated...The other change concerned exclusive language, that is, the use of masculine nouns and pronouns when both genders are intended. Beginning with the very first line in the *Psalter Hymnal*, "That man is blest" becomes "How blest are they." (25)

How blest are *they*? How blest are *THEY*?!

Psalm 1 is not about *they*. Psalm 1 is about a man. That man is blessed. That man walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. That man standeth

not in the way of sinners. That man sitteth not in the seat of the scornful. That man's delight is in the law of the Lord. That man meditates in God's law day and night. That man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. That man bringeth forth his fruit in his season. That man's leaf shall not wither. Whatsoever that man doeth shall prosper. That man is not like the ungodly.

The entire psalm is about that man, and that man is Jesus Christ. Psalm 1 cannot be rendered with "inclusive" language but must be rendered with "exclusive" language: masculine nouns and pronouns—man, him, he. To change the language to *they* is to gut the psalm of Christ.

Although Boonstra did not mean to make this point, his chapter illustrates the fact that a loss of the psalms and a loss of the gospel go hand in hand. The riches of Christ commend the psalms to the church. But when the church has become jaded with the riches of Christ, then she also has little use for Christ's songs. Dissatisfaction with the psalms, a lust for hymns, an opening of the door to hymns, and a tinkering with the psalms are all symptoms of the dread disease of dissatisfaction with Christ. On the other hand, a love for the psalms and a determination to bar the door against hymns are the fruits of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the sweet psalmist of Israel.

In conclusion, I recommend this first chapter in *A Goodly Heritage* as interesting and instructive. The history of the congregational songbooks of the RCA and CRC is fascinating. And even though the reader must often discern for himself the instruction of the historical record, the lesson of the RCA's and CRC's fall from psalmody is a warning to the church today. May God preserve his church in the gospel of Christ and in the joyful noise of that gospel in the psalms.

"Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely" (Ps. 147:1).

—AL

## Article L. The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)

**I**t is not in the book of Revelation that we read a prophecy concerning Gog and Magog and their rising against the camp of the saints for the first time. Already in the O.T. we find mention of them. The book of Ezekiel in chapters 38 and 39 presents us with an elaborate description of the conflict between Gog and Magog and the people of God in the latter days. And it will be instructive to turn to that passage and compare its much more elaborate prediction concerning Gog and Magog with the briefer prophecy in Rev. 20.

And then, it may be remarked in the first place, that in Ezekiel as in Revelation 20 Gog and Magog appear as numerous hordes, as a powerful enemy, well prepared and equipped for the conflict with the people of Jehovah. In Ezekiel Gog is pictured not only as the prince of Magog, but also as the leader of many other nations. Rosh, Yeshech, Tubal, Persia, Cush and Put, Gomer and Togarmah are mentioned by name. And besides, we receive the impression time and again that they appear from the uttermost parts of the north in countless numbers and thoroughly prepared for the battle. They have horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them handling swords, 38:4. Gog ascends like a storm, like a cloud he covers the land with all his hordes, and many peoples are with him, 38:9. And he is pictured as coming from the uttermost parts of the north, with a tremendous force, all of them riding upon horses, a great company and a mighty army, 38:15. The same picture is given in Revelation 20:7–9, where Gog and Magog are pictured as the nations that live in the four corners of the earth, where they are

described as numerous like the sand of the sea, and where their march is presented as covering the breadth of the earth. Gog and Magog, then, both according to the prophecy of Ezekiel, is a name applied to many nations, powerful and prepared for battle in the day that they are deceived to rise against the saints.

In the second place, it cannot escape our attention that in Ezekiel as in Revelation, Gog and Magog are pictured as nations that come from the remotest parts of the earth. They are, indeed, no “utopian” nations, they are not imaginary peoples, they are not merely names to represent in general the force of opposition that throughout the ages rises against the kingdom of God. On the contrary, they are very particular nations, and they must surely be distinguished from the power of the false prophet and of antichrist. They are actually existing nations. There is no reason to think that the nations mentioned as Gog and Magog and their associates in Ezekiel did not really exist and were not known to exist at the time of the prophet, even though it may be difficult for us to identify them. But although they are actually existing nations, they are scarcely known, they are nations that never played a significant part on the stage of history. It is not Egypt and Babylon and Assyria, the nations that are the very embodiment of enmity and opposition against the kingdom of God in Scripture, that are mentioned in Ezekiel, but Magog, Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Cush and Put, Gomer and Togarmah constitute the force that shall in the latter days rise up against the people of God’s covenant. It is an altogether new force of opposition, an army never seen before. They come from hither-to unheard of regions,

and their mustered force is described as rising from the uttermost part of the north. The same phenomenon is mentioned briefly but significantly in Revelation 20:8, where they are described as the nations that live in the four corners of the earth. They are, therefore, nations that live outside of the pale of history and civilization. Before their final conflict with the people of God they exerted no appreciable influence upon the history of the world. They lived in comparative isolation, they were not numbered among the nations that controlled the world's progress.

In the third place it is plain that in Ezekiel as in Revelation they are pictured as enemies of the people of God in general, as nations that gather and rise for battle against the saints. An evil device is in their hearts and minds. They are deceived into plotting against the people of Jehovah. The evil device is evidently that they conceive of the plan to fight the people of God, destroy them and enrich themselves with their possessions. Hatred of the people that dwell securely and a desire for spoil actuates them. But the deception of the whole thing is that while they conceive of the possibility of destroying the people of God's covenant, in reality they are only gathered for the battle of the Almighty and His final judgment over them. Thus is the picture in Ezekiel, and thus is the representation in Revelation. The points of difference are, first of all that Ezekiel naturally pictures the enemy of the camp of the saints and the beloved city. According to Ezekiel Israel has been restored, and they dwell as one nation in the land of their fathers under David their king. And it is while they are dwelling securely in the land of God's covenant, that Gog and his hordes come against them for spoil. In other words, Ezekiel presents the prophecy in a form derived from the old dispensation. It would for the present lead us too far astray from our main subject to show in detail how in the light of all Scripture Israel serves as symbol and type of the people of God of all ages, in our passage particularly of the people of God of the latter days. Perhaps we shall have occasion to do this at some future time. Be it

sufficient now to simply state that we regard the literal (so-called) interpretation of prophecy as untenable, and that in the passage under discussion Israel is type of the people of God of the new dispensation. But in Revelation this O.T. form falls away. It speaks of the camp of the saints. And true it is that it also speaks of the beloved city, but so impossible is the idea that this beloved city is the chief city of Canaan in the literal interpretation to all the passages where mention is made of Israel and Jerusalem and the Holy City and the Temple; be consistent in the application of this so-called literal interpretation and you may find out how this method leads to wildest absurdities. Hence, Gog and Magog come against the people of God, in Ezekiel pictured as Israel, in Revelation described as the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And the second point of difference is that while in Revelation 20 Gog and Magog are presented as being deceived by Satan after he is loosed from his prison, in Ezekiel this deception is attributed directly by the prophet to God. Neither is there any real conflict between the two passages in this respect. The harmony between them is found in the fact that God, indeed, gathers Gog and Magog for battle and judgment, that His name may be sanctified before the world, Ez. 38:23; but for all this he employs the devil as His instrument. It is under God's control that the devil is loosed out of his prison and that he goes forth to deceive the nations that live on the four corners of the earth.

And finally, the whole scene is pictured as belonging to the distant future, as a prophecy to be realized in the latter days in the narrower sense of that term. For not only is it expressly stated in Ezekiel that all this shall come to pass in the latter days, an expression which in itself might refer to the new dispensation in general, but the entire context leaves the impression that the conflict with Gog and Magog belongs to the very last. Just before this prophecy the divine seer had received a vision of the final restoration of the people of God in the land of their fathers; and following the prophecy concerning Gog and Magog we find the description of the New Kingdom and its Temple in its final glory. The same

is true of the passage in the book of Revelation. The nations of Gog and Magog are pictured last of all as the nations that shall rise against God's people. And after their rebellion is pictured to us we only read of the final judgment and the establishment of the ultimate and eternal form of God's kingdom and covenant. And, therefore, the conflict that is pictured in our passage belongs to the very last, is still future, shall take place shortly before the inauguration of the eternal state of the kingdom of God.

In the light of all this we are convinced that Gog and Magog represent those nations that in the new dispensation live outside of the pale of history and civilization, and at the same time outside of the sphere of Christendom in its outward manifestation in the world. In other words, Gog and Magog are the heathen nations in general. It is, indeed, remarkable that after nineteen centuries the gospel of the kingdom has touched but certain nations, while others are still in the darkness of heathendom. The world may be generally divided into a Christian and a heathen world. Mark, we do not mean to state that every individual among the outwardly Christian nations may be regarded a Christian in very fact. We do not believe that a majority of individuals among these could be called Christian, indeed. We are well aware that from the bosom of these Christian nations antichrist shall appear. And on the other hand, we do not deny that from among the heathen nations individuals have been converted to Christianity and that under the influence of the preaching of the gospel to all nations, more of these shall be gathered into the kingdom. But the fact remains that on the one hand we may speak of Christian nations, ruled by Christian laws, among whom you meet with Christian institutions, generally walking in the light of Christendom; while on the other hand there are the heathen nations, nations that as such have never been christened. It is also remarkable that these latter, as is a well-known fact, are by far in the majority. Christians, even if taken in the outward, historical sense, constitute but a small minority if compared with the

nations of the world in general. And thirdly, in the light of these facts it is once more remarkable that in the new dispensation the world is nevertheless controlled by Christian nations. The nations of Asia and Africa, of Australia and the islands of the sea, never exerted any appreciable influence upon the development of the world's history. The world is controlled, its history is determined humanly speaking, by Christian nations. And the numerically tremendous force of heathendom is powerless, is in bonds over against the nations that are called after the name of Christ. In the old dispensation this was different. Then Israel existed in the seclusion of its isolated national life, and the world was controlled by Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, Greece and Rome. Heathendom, organized heathendom, sat on the throne of the world. In the new dispensation the relation is evidently changed. Once more we emphasize that we do not at all labor under the illusion that the Spirit of Christ rules in the saving sense of the word in the hearts of the nations, or that by far the majority of individuals among baptized Christendom spiritually bow before the King of Zion. This was not the case with Israel of the old dispensation. But the fact remains, that the relation is changed. The heathen nations live on the four corners of the earth, have no influence in the world. The nations of Christendom are in control.

It is this truth we find expressed in Revelation 20. With regard to the nations Gog and Magog the devil is bound. He cannot deceive them to gather their force against Christendom. But in the end of time he shall be loosed out of his prison. Under God's own control he shall go forth to deceive those nations that never played a part in the history of the world. They shall go forth with the evil device in their minds to strike at the people of God's covenant. But they shall be deceived, indeed. And in the day of the great God Almighty, they shall meet their fate. The judgment of the king of kings shall come upon them, and the Name of Jehovah shall be sanctified also in them.

—Holland, Mich.