

The STANDARD BEARER



A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

This organization, which has already for a considerable time faithfully supported the above-named preachers, shall henceforth devote itself to this same task by this monthly magazine. The members feel that there must be a striving for the cause of the Lord not only against the enemies who stand outside their own church fellowship, but, under the present circumstances, no less against the enemy within the gates. Therefore they want men to raise the “standard” and instruct and lead the people of God in the strife which is inevitable and which must be fought. A need is felt for leadership in ecclesiastical questions, points of doctrine, prevalent speculations, and the practical application in life of the principles out of which people live. And although they do not plan to limit themselves in this struggle to the publication of this periodical, nevertheless they want “The Standard Bearer” to lead the way in this difficult strife. (See Page 52)

November 1, 1973

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MEDITATION

Our Defense In Distress

Rev. M. Schipper

"The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."

Nahum 1:7.

Strange, indeed, is the place this text occupies in the context in which it is found, as well as in this entire book of prophecy.

The prophet had received a vision of the Lord respecting the complete devastation of Nineveh. And of this he unburdens himself as he speaks throughout the book, of the manifestation of Jehovah's wrath as it shall be displayed overagainst this ancient kingdom. The reader will remember that at one time, perhaps a hundred and fifty years before this, Nineveh had been spared through the preaching of the prophet Jonah. At that time the people with their king had repented of the evil they had done, much to the chagrin of the Lord's prophet. They covered themselves with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and He repented of the evil that He threatened to bring upon them. But it was about a century and a half later when this same kingdom made full its cup of iniquity, and the Lord through the prophet Nahum now predicts the consuming devastation that He would bring upon them. The entire prophecy pronounces maledictions upon Nineveh.

In the midst of this sentence of destruction you find the words of our text, standing out as it were as a beacon of light towering over the black clouds of judgment. Or, to describe it a little differently, as a crest in the arc of the rainbow the text stands emblazoned, transcendent above the storm of God's wrath.

No doubt the significance of the text in the light of the entire prophecy must be understood in the light of the name of the prophet.

Nahum, — means: consolation!

Not, you understand, with a view to the wicked who are about to be consumed in judgment; but for the righteous, who always are delivered from the wrath to come!

To them Jehovah is a strong hold in the day of trouble!

Of Him the prophet declares: Good is Jehovah!

He is that, of course, first of all, in Himself! Negatively this means that never can any evil be found in Him. Were He to be searched out, which of course is forever impossible, never could any imperfection be discovered within His holy Being. Positively this implies that He is the perfect One, in Whom only good resides. Or, as the Word of God describes Him throughout, He is the overflowing fountain of goodness. Shall there be any manifestation of goodness, it must find its source in Him. He is full of infinite perfections!

Jehovah's goodness is the sum of all His perfections! His goodness is His righteousness and holiness, His love and His mercy and grace.

Nor is there ever any conflict between these virtues, so that His mercy is opposed to His justice, and His love to His wrath. Rather, all His virtues are one in Him, and therefore His righteousness is always a merciful righteousness, while His mercy is always a righteous mercy. And when all His attributes are added up, the sum total is His goodness.

It is this truth that receives the emphasis in the text. The original text expresses it this way:

Good is Jehovah!

That Jehovah is good, means that He is unchangeably good! Jehovah is the I AM THAT I AM! He is never in the process of becoming. He always is what He was. There is no variableness, no shadow cast by turning, in Him. Eternally He stands in the meridian of His own perfect Being. From everlasting to everlasting He is God Who is good. He is eternally the overflowing Fountain of goodness Who, while He overflows with goodness, remains forever full of goodness.

Moreover, in that name Jehovah He is revealed as the God of the everlasting covenant. It is the Name whereby He is particularly revealed to His people as the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. To

His chosen people as to none other He is made known in this Name.

Never should this goodness of Jehovah be understood in the sense that it winks at sin. So some have and still do conceive of His goodness. They cannot conceive of a good God Who hates sin and the evil doer. Such a God they castigate as being a tyrant. And though it may seem strange that in the midst of prophecy, that speaks of divine vengeance and storms of judgment, we should read as we do in our text that Jehovah is good; it should be clearly understood that God reveals His wrath overagainst the wicked only because He is good. Were He to wink at sin, He would give evidence that He is unrighteous and unholy. And such is His goodness also overagainst the sin of His people. His wrath burns overagainst their sin and guilt because He is good. The highest manifestation of this goodness revealed in wrath overagainst their sin we see at the cross. Surely the good God did not wink at our sin, but saw to it that all our sin was paid for when He emptied the vials of His holy wrath on the head of our Redeemer. There at the cross, mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. There His goodness is displayed in His justice, which demanded that our sins be atoned for; while at the same time His goodness is displayed in His mercy and grace, which prepared such a Saviour Who did atone for our sins.

Nor should it ever be said that Jehovah's goodness is common. Though He shows unto all men the truth that He is good, when He causes His rain and sunshine to fall on the evil and the good, never should the wicked nor we conclude that Jehovah is good to the wicked. He gives the wicked the good gifts of rain and sunshine in His wrath. As the Scriptures plentifully declare when the wicked prosper, it is that they may be destroyed forever. And His wrath is the manifestation of His holy self-love, whereby He destroys all that is not in complete harmony with His holy Being. Verily, His goodness is always particular! It is shown only unto His covenant people whom He has chosen in Christ, known in love, and whom He purposes to make His covenant friend-servants.

That this goodness of Jehovah is particular is clearly expressed throughout the Word of God, but also in this prophecy. As suggested above, that goodness is negatively expressed in the fact that God is righteous when He is about to destroy the wicked. This tone is set forth in the opening verses of this prophecy. "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." And again, "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame." And the

wickedness of Nineveh and the guilt of Assyria rests in the fact that this kingdom merited Jehovah's wrath when they emptied Jacob, and marred the vine branches of Israel. (Chap. 2:2).

But the particular nature of Jehovah's goodness is positively expressed not only in the text, but also in the ultimate deliverance of Jehovah's people from the hand of the wicked. "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off," (Chap. 1:15).

Jehovah is to them a strong defense!

A strong hold in the day of trouble!

That there is a day of trouble for the wicked is evident from the entire prophecy as well as from all of Scripture. When the wicked shall call to the mountains to cover them, when they could wish for annihilation so that they would not have to do with Jehovah Who shall consume them in His wrath.

But there is also a day of trouble for the righteous! It is not so that they are immune to trouble. Not so is it that they ride serenely above the storms of life. God does not immediately whisk them out of the world to heaven when He saves them. Fact is, He brings them to heaven only after they walk a while as strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and after they have been tried and tested in the crucible of affliction. Because they are righteous in Christ, not with their own righteousness, which is as filthy rags, they are reproached and maligned, persecuted and killed all the day long. Also they, as well as the wicked, are often enveloped in the judgments God sends upon the world, as righteous Lot was witness to the destruction of wicked Sodom. And when God could send upon Nineveh the storm of His wrath, the children of Jacob and Judah would see it. But here is the good tidings upon the mountains that publisheth peace — O Judah, you must hear it. Jehovah our good God is a strong hold in the day of trouble! In the midst of the storm Jehovah will prove to be a hiding place, a sheltered garrison, into which the righteous may flee and be safe; while the oppressor shall be vanquished. The day of trouble He makes to be the day of His people's salvation. Surely, also then, it shall become evident that all things work together for good unto them that love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

For He knoweth them that trust in Him!

O, yes, He knows them!

Not, you understand, because He saw beforehand that we would put our trust in Him. Such Arminianism is as wicked as the sin of Nineveh. Rather, He knows us in eternal, elective love. And

that love He demonstrates most clearly in the death and resurrection of our Saviour. That love He sheds abroad in our hearts by the Spirit of Christ. And in response to that love, we, who are His people, love Him, and put our trust in Him. One will not put his trust and confidence in one whom he does not know in love, and of whom he is not sure that that one knows him in love.

So it is also in the text, — they that put their trust in Jehovah, Who is good, have tasted His goodness. His love has been shed abroad in their hearts. And

this love fills their hearts with assurance that He knows them in distinction from the wicked, and that He will save them unto the uttermost.

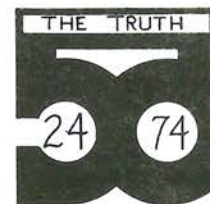
When the indignation of the Lord shall come as a storm of judgment upon Nineveh, they whom good Jehovah knows in love will flee unto Him, — the Strong Hold in the day of trouble.

In Him they, that trust in Him, have a safe retreat!

Indeed, He is our defense in distress!

The Standard Bearer In Retrospect (2)

Prof. H. Hanko



The first issue of "The Standard Bearer" appeared October 1, 1924. It was, from many points of view, an historic moment. It was the fruit of the labors of a group of men determined to set forth and develop the truth of the Word of God. It was occasioned especially by the "common grace" controversy which a short time after the first issue appeared, gave rise to the Protestant Reformed Churches.

In this first issue an article appears which was intended to introduce "The Standard Bearer" to its readers. But, more than that, it sets forth the positive purpose for publishing a separate periodical — which could only have been one more paper among many others; and it speaks of the direction "The Standard Bearer" intended to take in the future. This article

was written by Rev. Henry Danhof, one of the first editors and a minister who, along with Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff, was deposed from office in the Christian Reformed Church for his refusal to subscribe to the three points of common grace. He was minister at the time in a Christian Reformed congregation in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

It is interesting to note, as one reads this article, that, although "The Standard Bearer" has indeed undergone many changes in format — something which Rev. Danhof suggested might be necessary — it has not, up to the present, changed in its original purpose and goal. For this we may be thankful.

The article follows in a translation from the Dutch.

THE STANDARD BEARER

H. Danhof

In "For The Sake of Right and Truth", the latest brochure of the ministers Danhof and Hoeksema, the writers quite extensively expressed themselves concerning their plan for the publication of a monthly magazine. In this pamphlet the specific conditions and certain serious events are also included which gave them the occasion to seek for a periodical in which they would be able to develop their thoughts unhindered and use this means to enlighten others. At that time they also drew attention to the principles from which they determined to proceed in such a paper, as well as the purpose they had in mind,

and the manner in which they hoped to work. Conscious of all that, we now consider it sufficient to give a short introduction of "The Standard Bearer" of the "Reformed Free Publishing Association" to our reading public.

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This organization, which has already for a considerable time faithfully supported the above-named preachers, shall henceforth devote itself to this same task by this monthly magazine. The members feel that there must be a striving for the cause of the Lord not only against the enemies who stand outside their own church fellowship, but, under the present circumstances, no less against the enemy within the gates. Therefore they want men to raise the "standard" and instruct and lead the people of God in the strife which is inevitable and which must be fought. A need is felt for leadership in ecclesiastical questions, points of doctrine, prevalent speculations, and the practical application in life of the principles out of which people live. And although they do not plan to limit themselves in this struggle to the publication of this periodical, nevertheless they want "The Standard Bearer" to lead the way in this difficult strife.

Herewith the position of the editorial staff is sufficiently explained. The writers want to let God's Word speak; they want to work in a reforming and progressive reformed spirit. They adhere to a Bible-believing, not philosophical, conception of the revelation of God. They are looking for the right emphasis of the will of the Lord along the entire line of all human activity and Christian living. Not everything therefore, which has been set forth in history as Reformed doctrine shall easily and arbitrarily be considered Biblical. They do not subscribe to every proposition of the fathers, not then, when the shadow of a wrong judgment falls on the Confession of the churches. There is indeed caution required. Yet the true welfare of the church demands nevertheless, that the full light of the Word of God be made to shine on all things which bear a relation to the right concern for the truth of the Son of God; because we are children of God, we must be irreproachable, and upright, without blame in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation in which we shine as light in the world, holding high the Word of life. We must never cease from this. And for this purpose the editorial staff of "The Standard Bearer" seeks also to qualify the church of the Lord.

As far as contents are concerned, this periodical

shall join itself completely with what has been taught during the last years and published by the ministers Hoeksema and Danhof. Already this first number contains an historical survey of the events of recent days. History has been made. That history is of concern for our churches. It can even be very important for the future. Therefore we want to rescue this history from oblivion. And for the same reason we shall also from time to time, keep up to date our history book. At the same time the present state of affairs can be ascertained from it. We desire that opponents as well as friends should be acquainted with the matter so that they may be able knowingly to deal with matters. With that in mind, we also, at the beginning, make mention of the three points which the latest Synod assumed responsibility for in the matter of common grace. It is better that the pertinent discussion of the Synodical decisions stay out of this material for a short time. But the right understanding of the matter is surely very necessary so that men may know what was decided and that men may also know the shell from which the final decision, as a proper kernel, at long last came to light. We consider this necessary all the more because from less qualified quarters, especially in foreign periodicals, matters are sometimes set forth in a very strange way. Even at the outset, we want to make perfectly clear that we do not intend to cling to the literal language of the synodical pronouncements so as to commit violence to the spirit of the decisions. Our purpose is precisely the opposite. We shall linger only briefly with the literal wording of the so called "three points." But we hope to set clearly before our readers their real implications. Our viewpoint underwent no modification, and we gave no thought to retreat. The editorial staff of this paper judges that no Reformed man is able to sign these propositions of Synod as long as they are unchanged according to their clear implications. Therefore they shall attempt to understand rightly these decisions in their exact sense so that after sufficient study, each and every one will be able to treat the matter with awareness of his work and its consequences.

"The Standard Bearer" is in direct contact with life. It cannot be ignored in discussion. The subjects which it treats lie too near the heart of God's people. The present day question touches above all our view of God. That became evident already before the Synod, but it came to light more clearly during the Synodical gatherings. In everything—reports, speeches, arguments—this shone through. There were differences of viewpoint concerning God. Around that central point however, related questions grouped themselves. These were questions concerning predestination, the idea of the covenant, the law of the Lord, the temptation in Paradise, the cause of sin,

the depravity of men, the revelation of God's wrath, the operation of the curse, the development of evil, the freedom of man's will and his responsibility, the showing of favor, the preaching of the gospel, the works of the Spirit, deception, attack, fear, blinding, savagery, hardening, perversion, in connection with the works of the prince of darkness; the natural knowledge of God, the tradition of revelation, the battle of all ages, the consciousness of independence, solidarity, alienation, disharmony; the experience of pain and grief and sadness and despair, but also of deliverance, strengthening, comforting, change and renewal; the work of faith, trust, prayer, love, praise, but equally of unbelief, disdain, hate, blasphemy and cursing; etc. All these and similar matters are of such supremely great concern because they more or less touch man in the depths of the life of his soul and in the choice of his heart. The kernel of every difference in this realm then, is hidden also in the conception which one has of the freedom of man's will in connection with the will of God. Strictly speaking, every difference concerns the nature of God's will. Therefore, we cannot conceive of any other possibility but that every truly Reformed man presently pricks up his ears as soon as he hears mention made of these things. Not to do this would immediately bring vengeance. He loses contact with history. Indeed, the Reformed fathers fought a dreadful fight just exactly concerning that point. And we possess in the fruit of their work, the touchstone of the purity of Reformed preaching concerning this question; while we also, according to the same standard, attempt to apply this to practical living. Therefore men in our circles shall surely bend an ear to listen when these things are treated in close connection with actual life in a practical way.

Long series of articles on one and the same subject shall not appear in our monthly periodical. Nor have we divided everything in fixed rubrics. Yet we do have a definite plan in mind. In the treatment of different and separate subjects, certain main topics have been followed. Chiefly we ask in each case, first

of all, concerning the conception which God gives in His revelation and the view which we consequently must take. Then attention will be paid to the historical development of revelation and the historical significance of things. Meanwhile, we, at the same time and again and again, shall glance around us to pay attention to actual deeds and events. If the case should arise that an important subject, after short discussion, should justify a more many-sided and systematic treatment, then that shall probably take place in a supplement or a separate brochure.

We are not directing ourselves towards a definite class or group. Our purpose is to help to live a more conscious, more fervent, deeper, richer, more multi-faceted positive Christian life for our Lord, now, in this present evil world. As much as possible, everything shall be arranged with that in view. We shall reckon with the circumstances of that life; first of all with our own ecclesiastical circumstances, because they are the circumstances in which we exist. If we should consequently come into contact in our periodical with life, our life, then we must know the circumstances rightly. With a view to this, it can very well be that our periodical undergoes change from time to time. But we shall have to wait and see.

We shall write in the Dutch and in the English language, nearly in the same proportion because such is the requirement of our time. But the contents of the articles will be taken into account. Therefore, at least temporarily, the balance will perhaps tip towards the language of the fathers.

The writers assume responsibility not only for their respective contributions, but for the entire basic content, according to its principle and import. There is also, however, provision made for cooperation and contributions. And although we do not place open our columns for everything which people might want to see taken up, we shall deal properly with what is brought to our attention.

Let "The Standard Bearer" thus enter the world.

TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION: 10 Issues for \$2.00.

Write our business office.

EDITORIALS

The OPC and the “Free Offer” (4)

CONTRARY TO THE CONFESSIONS (continued)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Since our discussion of this subject is rather protracted and has been frequently interrupted, it may be well to remind ourselves of the question under discussion. In general, it is this: is the doctrine of a “free offer” of the gospel, as set forth in the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet, *The Free Offer Of The Gospel*, and as maintained by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (among others!), consistent with our Reformed confessions?

More specifically, we are investigating the confessional correctness or incorrectness of the proposition that there is in God “a real attitude, a real disposition of lovingkindness inherent in the free offer to all.” This, we must remember, is the fundamental thesis implicit in the theory of a “free offer.” In one form or another, all who hold to this theory make it plain that they hold to some kind of “common grace.” This is very plain already in the introductory section of the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet. In it we read, p. 4: “The word ‘desire’ has come to be used in the debate, not because it is *necessarily* the most accurate or felicitous word but because it serves to set forth quite sharply a certain implication of the full and free offer of the gospel to all. This implication is that in the free offer there is expressed not simply the bare preceptive will of God but the disposition of lovingkindness on the part of God pointing to the salvation to be gained through compliance with the overtures of gospel grace. In other words, the gospel is not simply an offer or invitation but also implies that God delights that those to whom the offer comes would enjoy what is offered in all its fullness.” Here the matter is very plain, at least if one is not fooled by some of the jargon and sleight-of-hand switch in terminology. For notice, in the first place, that the main proposition here is very simple: “God delights that those to whom the offer comes (reprobate as well as elect, HCH) would enjoy what is offered in all its fullness.” It is rather tragic, however, that educated and learned men, especially when they wish to cling so tenaciously to a certain doctrine, cannot express themselves more clearly and precisely. If they would, of course, their Arminianism and their contradiction of the Reformed position would stand out in sharp

relief! But now the waters must be muddied. Notice: 1) That the authors have already made it plain that they do not mean by this theory the *decretive* will of God. That, of course, would be too plain a contradiction of the Reformed doctrine of double predestination. 2) But neither do they mean “the bare preceptive will of God.” Well, of course not! An offer, after all, is by no means the same as a precept, a command, a demand. True, there belongs to the gospel the *command* to repent and believe; and although this is not *all* of the gospel, at least the error would not have been so serious if the authors had only meant to stress the *demand* of faith and repentance. But mark you well, the authors themselves do not intend this; they say so in plain words. And it’s well that we pay attention to this difference. For it is certainly Reformed to say – and we as Protestant Reformed do indeed teach – that in the promiscuous proclamation of the gospel the demand of faith and repentance comes to all who hear the preaching. Let there be no mistake on that score! But neither let anyone confuse this with a general offer! The adherents of the offer-theory mean something different. 3) But now begins the sleight-of-hand. First it is: “. . . in the offer there is expressed *not simply the bare preceptive will of God . . .*” (italics added) But now notice the substitution of ideas: “*In other words*, the gospel is *not simply an offer or invitation . . .*” (italics added) As though “the bare preceptive will of God” is equivalent to “simply an offer or invitation”! This is playing with words. 4) But even this is not enough. It must be made plain, too, that the offer means that God actually delights that those to whom the offer comes would enjoy what is offered in all its fullness.

At this point, however, it would seem that the authors feel they have gone a little too far in stressing what in the next paragraph they again call “a real disposition of lovingkindness inherent in the offer to all.” For in the conclusion of the paragraph they throw some sand in the eyes of the reader: “And the word ‘desire’ has been used in order to express the thought epitomized in Ezekiel 33:11, which is to the effect that God has pleasure that the wicked turn from his evil way and live. It might as well have been

said, 'It pleases God that the wicked repent and be saved.'"

Now here is a stellar example of the kind of language which confuses the simple and unwary and which is (deliberately?) calculated to try to drive any denier of the offer-theory between a rock and a hard place. If anyone denies the well-meant offer, he is now going to be suspect of denying Ezekiel 33:11. And that, of course, is much worse than being against apple pie or motherhood. But let me make it crystal clear: 1) That I do not deny Ezekiel 33:11. When the proper time comes in the later discussion of this pamphlet and this offer-view, we will explain the passage. 2) That I can even defend the proposition, "It pleases God that the wicked repent and be saved," — though not in the context in which the Murray-Stonehouse pamphlet paraphrases Ezekiel 33:11. 3) That it is by no means the same to say, "It pleases God that the wicked repent and be saved," as to say, "God delights that those to whom the offer comes would enjoy what is offered in all its fullness." The former statement can be understood to mean that it is right in God's sight that the wicked repent, and that He is pleased to save those who do repent. The latter statement can only mean that God is so filled with lovingkindness toward those to whom the "offer" comes (reprobate as well as elect!) that He wants them all to enjoy salvation. And the latter, of course, is nothing but universalism!

Would that the proponents of the offer-theory would use in their explanations of their theory language that is as precise and unequivocal as is the language of our confessions in setting forth the truth of sovereign, particular grace! Then all would know where they stand, and then the people would not be confused.

We shall have to return to this matter of linguistic hocus-pocus later: for the pamphlet is replete with such confusing language.

But now let us return to the business at hand.

We have been demonstrating that the offer-theory is contrary to our Reformed creeds. And thus far we have limited our proofs to Chapter III of the Westminster Confession of Faith. From this chapter we have seen that this confession not only does not allow room for a disposition of lovingkindness of God

toward the reprobate, but positively excludes it. Mind you, this means that the major premise of the offer-theory is shut out by the Westminster Confession.

However, we need not appeal only to Chapter III. The simple fact is that this entire theory is contrary to the *current teaching* of the Westminster Confession; it is foreign to it. If only people would get back to the confessions and their language, they would begin to have deep problems with the offer-theory. For the language of the confessions is sharp and distinctive.

Turn, for example, to the chapter on "Providence," Chapter V, paragraph 6:

As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous Judge, for former sins, doth blind and harden (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; Rom. 11:7, 8), from them He not only withholdeth His grace whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts (Deut. 29:4); but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had (Matt. 13:12; Matt. 25:29), and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin (Deut. 2:30; II Kings 8:12, 13); and, withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan (Ps. 81:11, 12; II Thess. 2:10-12), whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others (Exod. 7:3; Exod. 8:15, 32; II Cor. 2:15, 16; Isa. 8:14; I Pet. 2:7, 8; Isa. 6:9, 10; Acts 28:26, 27).

Once more we call your attention to the fact that in the full edition of the Westminster Confession of Faith the Scriptural proofs are printed in full. We have given only the references, for reasons of space. We strongly advise the reader who is interested in this subject to look up these passages of Scripture. They clearly confirm what the Confessions states, and they make it abundantly clear that the whole notion of a will of God to save all and a divine disposition of lovingkindness toward the reprobate-ungodly is utterly foreign to the Scriptures — foreign not merely to some isolated proof-texts, but foreign to the current thought of Scripture! It will be well worth the time to look up the texts referred to.

(to be continued)

REFORMED DOGMATICS, (Second printing). \$9.95 postpaid.

Gratifying Support -- Thank You!

Once in a while editorial-writing is an easy task and a very pleasant one.

This is one of those occasions. Our genial business manager rather regularly keeps me informed, either by telephone, by mail, or in person, concerning incoming R.F.P.A. mail. Once in a while a letter intended for me reaches him first; but most of the time the mail is business-mail, having to do with subscriptions, renewals, book orders, etc. Our business manager, who is supposed to be retired but who is actually kept very busy by his R.F.P.A. "sideline," gets a surprising amount of such business-mail. Not infrequently his mail will include an encouraging note about the work of the *Standard Bearer*. And very often when subscribers send in their renewal money, they will include an extra gift. Besides, the mail brings collection-checks from our supporting churches.

Well, it seems as though since our annual R.F.P.A. meeting — at which we received news of a substantial increase in publication costs — this mail to our business manager has been especially heavy. And our business manager called my attention to this fact, and gave me a suggestion to put a note of thanks in my editorial columns. I agreed heartily. And that makes this a very easy and pleasant editorial to write.

I can do no better than to quote directly from a couple of Mr. Vander Wal's notes to me. He puts it very forthrightly in a note written October 6: "Honestly — it's amazing! I haven't finished opening all of the mail which I picked up today from Box 6064, but have opened only three out of the ten received today. First one opened came from Kalamazoo, Mich. — renewal, \$7; check for \$10. No. 2 — from Byron Center — renewal \$7.00; check received for \$20. No. 3 from Downey, California — check for \$15! I'll open a couple more: from Chicago — renewal \$7; check for \$10. From Grand Rapids, \$10. Another from Grand Rapids, \$10. From Lansing, Illinois — \$10. I got to thinking, while opening these envelopes — do you know that *without* these \$10, \$15, and \$20 checks we would be 'out of business'? If all of the subscribers would send only the \$7 renewal fee, we'd go for broke! It costs about \$8.50 per subscription per year to print and mail each

subscriber his 21 issues each year. Without these extra gifts, and the collections from our Protestant Reformed churches, we surely would be out on a limb!"

From another progress report I glean the following sample of just one of four deposits which our business manager had made up to the 12th of October:

Church collection, \$119.30

Church collection, \$38.30

Renewals and subscriptions:

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Do you wonder that Mr. Business Manager exclaims, "Isn't that something, though!"

This is gratifying. It is gratifying to the Board and to our Manager. It is gratifying to the staff to know of the royal support that our magazine receives. And it will be encouraging, I am sure, to our constituency to learn of this. Personally, I heartily concur with Mr. Vander Wal when he writes me: "I believe that a 'thank you' note should be printed in a forthcoming issue of the *Standard Bearer*, a note which would explain to the readers and to the contributors just exactly how much their contributions mean to the support and the continuation of our paper."

Well, here is that "thank you."

And I want to add that I thank my God for this evidence among you of your dedication to the cause of His truth, the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

FEATURE

A Covenant Calling

In The Home

Rev. Richard G. Moore

It is the purpose of this article to focus attention on the covenant calling of Christian parents within the confines of family life. At the same time there necessarily will be Scriptural directives within the scope of this article for the covenant youth and children. Let us begin with the text that I would consider with you in this article. I refer to Eph. 6:4 "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." In particular, we will consider the last phrase of the text, "but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The context in which we find our text is significant. The apostle Paul reminds us in verses ten and following that the child of God has a battle to fight in this life. He is mindful that this is the portion of every Christian. This has been true throughout the ages. It is the battle of faith, the struggle to walk in the midst of the world as a stranger and a pilgrim. God's children are all called to seek God and His righteousness, and, conversely, to oppose all that opposes Him. The principle enemy is Satan, the wily devil, according to Paul. This struggle is against a very real and significant force. The apostle points out that it is a battle against principalities, powers and dominions, with wickedness in high places. In fact the battle is so great that the child of God will be able to stand only by putting on the whole armor of God. This armor of God is essentially the Word of God which is given us through the preaching. Paul literally points this out to us when he says: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about in truth, — and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, — and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Standing upon the gospel of Christ, having on this armor of God, we shall maintain the walk of faith. We will be given the courage to battle the battle of faith, and we may be assured of victory.

It is in this context that we find our text. God admonishes us to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord that they too, might put on the whole armor of God. An amazing calling our Lord gives to covenant parents. Let us consider it now in some detail. As we do so I would like to point out to our covenant youth, who ought to be reading this article, that the first remarks to be made concern your parents. However, it would be well that you read this first section carefully nevertheless. By doing so you will better understand the serious calling which God has given your parents when He gave you to them for a time. This should help you understand their care and concern for you. On the other hand, there will be specific remarks for you later in this article. Secondly, for our reading mothers I would like to remark that this text applies very directly to you, although the heading is, "ye fathers." Paul addresses the fathers because they are the head of the family and the full responsibility for the instruction of the covenant seed rests squarely upon them. However, much of the authority in the home, and much of the instruction is properly delegated to the mother. As you know, mothers, you often spend much more time with your children because father must provide the living. Remembering these comments let us directly consider the text. The instruction of the apostle is two-fold. We are to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The idea of the two terms used in our text is to

train the covenant seed by positive instruction, chastening, and admonition. Using the figure in the English term “nurture” we begin to understand the magnitude of this calling. To nurture is to give constant care and attention to something, that it might grow healthy and strong. For example if we plant a sapling in our yard, we must work the soil well, water it almost daily, see that it has sufficient fertilizer, perhaps tie it to a post to protect it against the wind, and as it grows, carefully prune it. By giving it this constant care the sapling will grow to be a healthy, fruit-bearing tree. It is with this type of diligence that we are to bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the *Lord*. Constantly, daily, we are to instruct the covenant seed in the knowledge of Jehovah, lead them into the green pastures of His Word, teach them the fear of His Name, bring the Word of God to bear upon their lives when they walk in ways outside of the Lord, chasten and admonish them, all with a view to their spiritual growth in the Lord, unto the end that they may put on the armor of God, fight the battle of faith, seek God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength as pilgrims and strangers in the midst of the earth.

Beloved, this is an amazing calling! Is it an easy one? Your answer undoubtedly is absolutely not! And this is as it should be. When one contemplates its demand, he immediately faces the fact of his own sinfulness. It is a battle to stand as God’s children personally, and now God requires that we lead our children properly in that battle? Yet, that is certainly the requirement of our text. Our confession must be that only by grace is it possible. My readers, it is the power of the gospel that makes you aware of your own sinfulness and frailty in this matter. But it is also the same power of God’s Word that turns the covenant parent to His promise of grace to carry out this calling. Our children are His heritage, God’s children, and He will not give you care of His children without also providing that which you need to care for them. Thus, first of all, let us often go to God in prayer for strength to carry out this calling. Secondly, let us take our strength from His Word to lead and guide the covenant seed. Finally, be assured God will indeed give you that of which you stand in need.

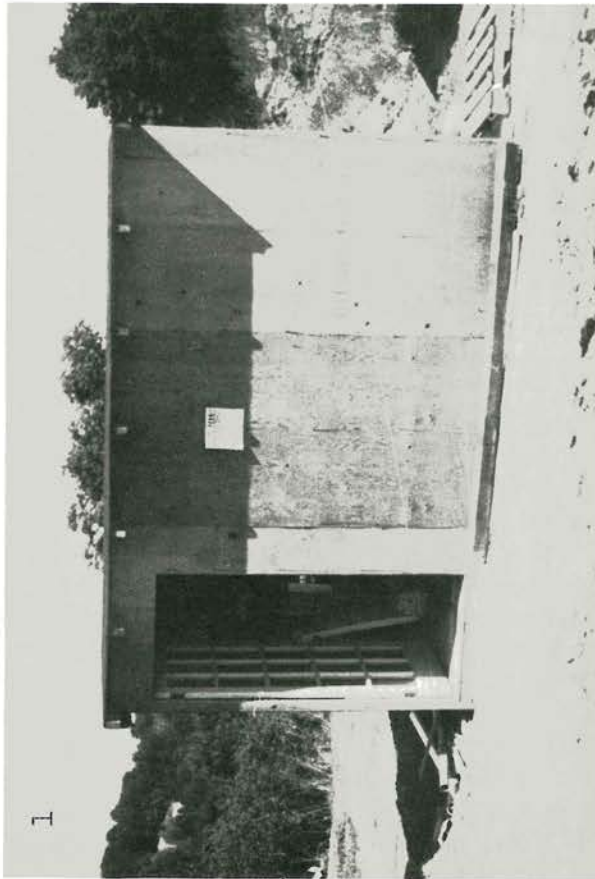
In the assurance of God’s grace, trusting in His Word let us now consider the means of carrying out this mandate. To do this I would like to call your attention to a passage of Scripture from the Old Testament. God had just given the law to Israel, and He instructed them with the words of Deut. 6:7 “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” The covenant parents are to talk to their children in all

these instances of God’s Word and Way! We are to be busy leading, guiding, instructing, encouraging, correcting our children and youth in all our family life. We are to talk to our children often!

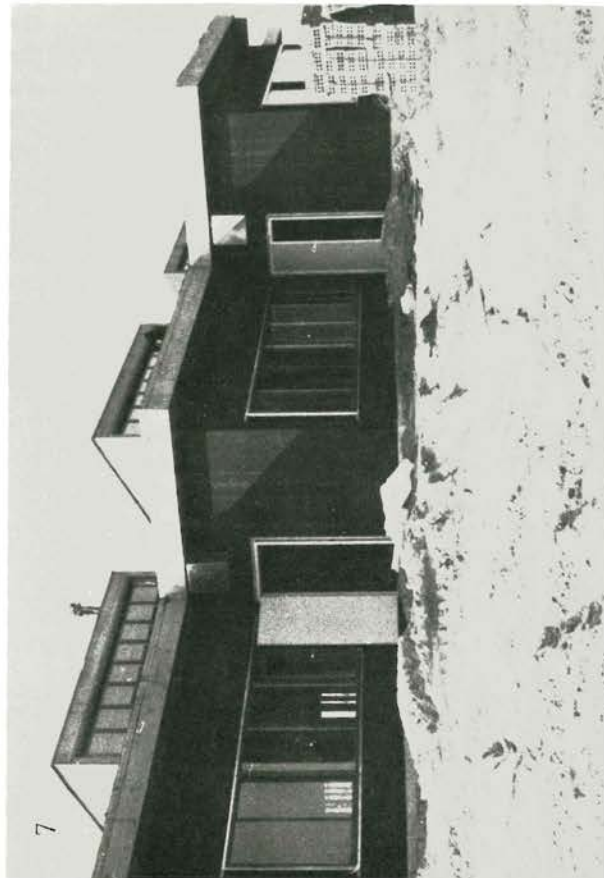
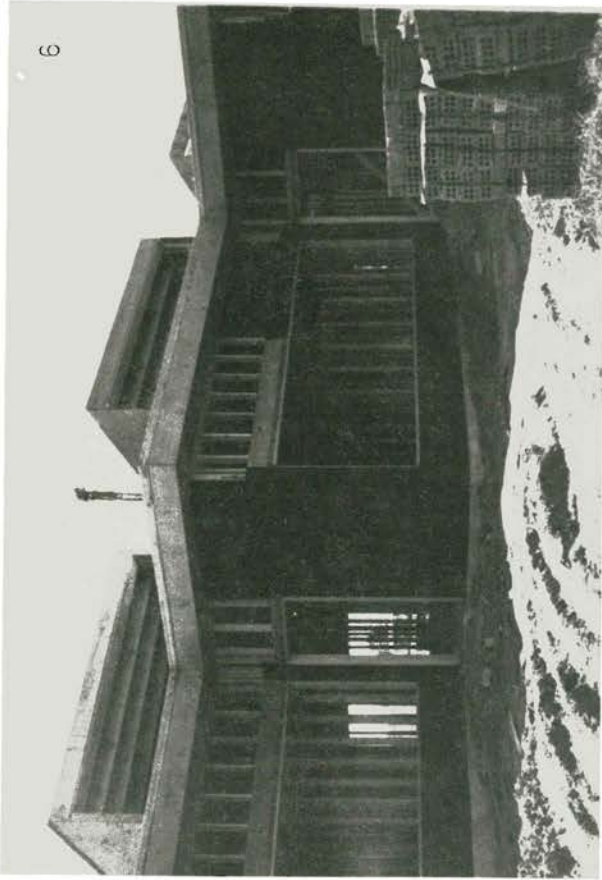
Covenant seed, implied here is the calling also to you to talk to your parents. Do you? Do you take your problems to your parents? Do you go to them for advice concerning a certain course of action that you may take? Do you seek out answers as to whether this is right or wrong? Or do you sometimes refrain from approaching your parents because you know their answer or advice is going to be contrary to your desire? Let it be said here that you ought often to go to your parents to talk with them, to confide in them, to seek their advice and encouragement. You ought to do this because you have most wonderful parents. They are covenant parents with a wisdom that is true and great. You may wonder at this; you may be tempted to say, “What could my parents know about my problems? They are too old to know.” But your parents do know. They have faced basically the same decisions you must. They have passed the same trials and temptations. And God has given them grace to stand in faith. Further, they have lived a good deal longer under the gracious preaching of the Word, growing in wisdom. Finally they love you, not only because of the blood relationship, but in the Lord. They desire to lead you in the straight and narrow way to glory. Go often to them. And rejoice that God has given you God-fearing parents. Many children are not so blessed. They have ungodly parents that lead them to hell.

Covenant parents, after this interlude we cannot fail but to be impressed with the magnitude and seriousness of our calling. Do we take time to sit in our homes and talk about the things of God’s kingdom? Are we ready to advise, to encourage, to lead and correct our covenant seed. We must! It is very necessary to take the time. Take every opportunity that arises. When your son or daughter asks: “Why does it rain?” explain it in terms of God’s Word. When your youths come with their problems, hear them out, and answer them with the wisdom of the Word of God. Consciously make God’s Word central in all of your life in the home. Read it, speak about it, seek out its preaching, and in your prayers together seek grace to walk as a family united in the Lord as strangers and pilgrims. Actively walk together as a family in the Lord, and make sure that you do things as a family. The world would have the family broken up. Insist that the family be together and walk together. And remember, the text in Deut. 6:7 refers to our whole life. Everything we do as parents speaks to our children. Our life is a speech. May God give you grace to walk as strangers and pilgrims, that also your children may so learn to walk.

Seminary Building – Pictorial Progress Report



1. The supervisor's shanty.
2. & 3. Steel beams being installed.
4. The "zebra-stripe" shadows show that the roof is still open.



5. Not roofless for long!
6. North elevation — clerestories under construction.
7. North elevation, showing the three classrooms and the finished clerestories.
8. North side of the all-purpose room.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Our Protestant Reformed Position Regarding The "Free Offer Of The Gospel" (1)*

Rev. David Engelsma

In this paper, we will treat the subject of the "free offer of the gospel" or, as it is also called, "the well-meant gospel offer." This is the teaching of some Reformed and Presbyterian Churches and of other Calvinists that God, in the preaching of the gospel, offers salvation to everyone who hears the preaching, out of His love for everyone and with the desire that everyone be saved.

It is evident that this teaching is no peripheral matter, of concern only to some Christians at a certain period in the history of the Church. Rather, this teaching raises questions that touch on the very heart of the gospel of grace. Does God love all men? Does God desire that all men be saved? Does God in the preaching try to accomplish the salvation of everyone? Is it the nature of preaching that it is an offer? If indeed God loves all and desires the salvation of all, why do some of them perish? Are God's love and grace defeated? What does this teaching do to the Scriptural doctrine of election and reprobation? What becomes of the doctrine of irresistible grace? The significance of the subject has recently been shown by developments in the Christian Reformed Church. In 1962-1964, Harold Dekker, professor of Missions in Calvin Theological Seminary, in a series of articles in *The Reformed Journal*, grounded his defense of universal atonement in the teaching of the well-meant gospel offer which the Christian Reformed Church adopted in 1924 in the first point of common grace. Of late, the subject of the free offer has been receiving much attention from Baptists who embrace some of the main tenets of Calvinism. These men express their views in several magazines, *Sword and Trowel*, *The Banner of Truth*, and *Reformation Today*. Recently, the editor of *Reformation Today*,

Erroll Hulse, published a booklet, "The Free Offer." They defend the free offer and castigate those who deny it as "hyper-Calvinists."

It is not the purpose of this paper to give an exhaustive treatment of the "free offer." I only want to draw the main lines, as I see them in the interest of our subsequent discussion.

* * * * *

By the "free offer," or the "well meant offer of the gospel," we understand the teaching of certain Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, as well as others who profess to love the doctrines of grace, or Calvinism, that God offers Christ and salvation to everyone in the preaching of the gospel and that He does this because He loves everyone and desires the salvation of everyone. This was the teaching of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 that became the occasion for the separate existence of our Protestant Reformed Churches. In the first of their three doctrinal statements regarding common grace, the C.R.C. said this:

"Relative to the first point which concerns the favorable attitude of God towards humanity in general and not only towards the elect, synod declares it to be established according to Scripture and the Confession that, apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general. This is evident from the Scriptural passages quoted and from the Canons of Dordrecht, II, 5 and III, IV, 8 and 9, which deal with the general offer of the Gospel, while it also appears from the citations made from Reformed writers of the most flourishing period of Reformed Theology that our Reformed writers from the past favored this view."

In this statement, the C.R.C. said that there is a

* a paper given at a Western Officebearers' Conference in Loveland, Colorado on September 5, 1973

"general offer of the Gospel" and that this offer is the expression of a "certain favor or grace of God" to all men, not only to the elect, but also to the reprobate. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has also officially adopted the teaching of the free offer as church doctrine. In 1948, they adopted the study of Professors John Murray and Ned Stonehouse that defended the free offer.¹ Following Murray and Stonehouse, the O.P.C. teaches that there is a free offer of the gospel, maintaining that:

"there is in God a benevolent lovingkindness towards the repentance and salvation of even those whom he has not decreed to save. This pleasure, will, desire is expressed in the universal call to repentance . . . The full and free offer of the gospel is a grace bestowed upon all. Such grace is necessarily a manifestation of love or lovingkindness in the heart of God. And this lovingkindness is revealed to be of a character or kind that is correspondent with the grace bestowed. The grace offered is nothing less than salvation in its richness and fulness. The love or lovingkindness that lies back of that offer is not anything less; it is the will to that salvation. In other words, it is Christ in all the glory of his person and in all the perfection of his finished work whom God offers in the gospel. The loving and benevolent will that is the source of that offer and that grounds its veracity and reality is the will to the possession of Christ and the enjoyment of the salvation that resides in him. ("The Free Offer of the Gospel," p. 27)

The Calvinistic Baptists mean essentially the same thing by the free offer as do the C.R.C. and the O.P.C. They are fond of quoting Murray and Stonehouse's work on the free offer as authoritative. Ian Murray may be taken as representative of these men. Writing in *Sword and Trowel* of February, 1969, in an article entitled, "The Free Offer of the Gospel," Murray defends the Marrow-men who taught "a universal Gospel offer." According to the Marrow-men and Murray, God invites everyone to salvation in the preaching of the Gospel. This offer is "a real and sincere offer. God is not offering something which He is unwilling to bestow. 'God offers Christ cordially and affectionately in the gospel; his very heart goes out after sinners in the call and offer thereof' . . . 'Christ is willing to come into every heart.'" The offer is a "universal expression of God's benevolence and compassion." "His benevolence and compassion, expressed in the universal call to repentance, extend to every creature even to those whom He has not decreed to save." Although the C.R.C., the O.P.C., and the Calvinistic Baptists claim that their doctrine of the free offer is

different from Arminianism, it is impossible to ignore that historically it was the Arminians who taught a universal, well-meant offer of salvation in the preaching. According to the Arminians, the free offer is backed up by universal atonement and harmonizes with a conditional election. Everyone to whom the preaching comes has the ability of free will to accept the offer, because God gives everyone sufficient grace. Salvation, therefore, depends upon one's acceptance of the offer. The Reformed Churches condemned the Arminians' doctrine of the offer in the Canons of Dordt (cf. III, IV, 10, 14; III, IV, The Rejection of Errors.)

The Protestant Reformed Churches deny the free offer. We maintain that the free offer is neither Scriptural nor confessional. We hold that the doctrine of the free offer that has found entrance into Reformed Churches is the introduction once again of the Arminian heresy into the Reformed sphere: "*En wij aarzelen niet, om het onomwonden uit to spreken, dat het standpunt van 1924 Arminiaansch is. De prediking des Evangelies algemeene genade, — dat is de Arminiaansche voorstelling.*"² It is necessary, however, for men to understand just exactly what we are denying when we deny the free offer. We must make clear what it is in the doctrine of a well-meant gospel offer that we regard as un-Biblical and un-Reformed. Our position is both misrepresented and misunderstood. We need not here concern ourselves with those who misrepresent us, knowing full well that we do not deny that which they put in our mouths. But we will concern ourselves with the misunderstanding of our position. Our denial of the offer is misunderstood by some because there have been those in the history of the Church and apparently are still some today, who have denied the offer for different reasons than we do. Some have denied the offer, meaning by this denial that the Church should not call everyone who hears the preaching to repent and believe. To use the language of classic Reformed theology, they have denied the external call of the gospel. Their people have been called "hyper-Calvinists." But this is not the idea of our opposition to the offer, nor is it an implication of our position.

For us, the issue is the teaching of the doctrine of the free offer that God is gracious in the preaching to everyone who hears the preaching, the reprobate as well as the elect. Inherent in the doctrine of the free offer is the teaching that God loves everyone (or, what amounts to the same thing, that there is an

¹ This study has been printed as a booklet entitled, "The Free Offer of the Gospel." It is available from Lewis J. Grotenhuis, Belvidere Road, Phillipsburg, N.J.

² H. Hoeksema, *Een Kracht Gods Tot Zaligheid of Genade Geen Aanbod*, 1930, p. 17. ("And we do not hesitate to express forthrightly that the standpoint of 1924 is Arminian. The preaching of the Gospel as universal grace — that is the Arminian idea.")

attitude of favor on God's part towards everyone, a gracious attitude), that God desires to save everyone, and that, therefore, the preaching is grace to all who hear. This is the doctrine of the well-meant offer as set forth by the C.R.C. in the first point of common grace of 1924. There is a "favorable attitude of God towards humanity in general," "a certain favor or grace of God," which is expressed in the "general offer of the Gospel." This is the conception of the free offer set forth by Murray and Stonehouse and adopted by the O.P.C. Erroll Hulse, a representative of the Calvinistic Baptists, is in full agreement: "But does he (God) desire or wish salvation for all? We answer, Yes!" ("The Free Offer," p. 7). Hulse sees the well-known words of Revelation 22:17 as "further cogent proof of the most gracious expressions of God concerning his will for all men to be saved" (p. 8). The love and grace of God revealed in the offer of the gospel is necessarily a saving love and grace. It is not saving as to its effect, for the defenders of the offer admit that it actually fails to accomplish the salvation of many towards whom it is directed. But it is saving as to its nature. It is a love that desires the salvation of the objects of that love. It is a grace expressed in the preaching of the gospel of the Savior from sin, indeed, a grace expressed in the well-meant offer of that Savior. Obviously, the grace of God for all men, including the reprobate, in the free offer is not the "common grace" of Abraham Kuyper, for that "grace" was only a temporal favor of God expressed in earthly things such as rain and sunshine. It was not saving as to its nature or as to God's intention. It was not expressed in any well-meant offer. But the grace of God expressed in the free offer is nothing less than a favor that desires to save and that goes out in the gospel itself. This is the very essence of the free offer, and it is to this that we are saying "No," when we deny the free offer. The free offer is a denial of the sovereignty of God's grace. The saving grace of God in Christ fails, and the love of God revealed in the cross of Calvary is frustrated. We see the issue as essentially the same as that for which the Reformed fathers contended at the Synod of Dordt against the Arminians. For do not forget that, although the truths of election, total depravity, the atonement, and perseverance were all at stake, the nub of the controversy was the Arminian's denial of efficacious, sovereign grace.³ Against this Arminian denial, the fathers maintained "irresistible grace," especially in Heads III, IV of the Canons.

History has verified our contention that the well-meant offer is Arminian in a striking way. In 1962-1964, Harold Dekker of the C.R.C. seminary argued from the well-meant offer to universal atonement. He showed, correctly, that there are not

two kinds of love or two kinds of grace in God: "The difference between common grace and special grace, between common love and special love, is not in the respective quality or essence of these, but in the effect produced" (*The Reformed Journal*, Feb., 1963). He expressed agreement on this point with Hoeksema: "both of us agree that God's love is not two but one, although he limits this one love of God to the elect while I ascribe it to all men" (*The Reformed Journal*, March, 1963). This one love is redemptive love. Dekker contended, again correctly, that by adopting the well-meant offer the C.R.C. had committed itself (rightly, in Dekker's view) to the teaching that God loves all men with a redemptive love and is gracious to them with saving grace. He then showed that this implies universal atonement. Dekker argued powerfully, as it turned out, irrefutably, that the doctrine of the well-meant offer demanded the teaching of universal atonement.

"Second, is the salvation which the atonement provides *available* to all men? Indeed it is. Otherwise the well-meant offer of the gospel is a farce, for it then offers sincerely to all men what cannot be sincerely said to be available to all" (*The Reformed Journal*, Dec., 1962).

"The Scriptures testify to a divine love for all men in the atonement of Christ and in the universal invitation of the gospel" (Redemptive Love and the Gospel Offer, *The Reformed Journal*, Jan., 1964. Cf. the entire article).

There is one step that the defenders of the free offer have refused to take as yet, the step of maintaining free will. This must come in time as the principles involved in the free offer work through. Already a man like Erroll Hulse takes a weak and dangerous position in this regard. As he struggles with the problem that God offers salvation to totally depraved sinners, absolutely incapable of accepting the offer, he writes: "As has been shown men are dead in sin, being dead to spiritual matters because of their enmity to God. Yet they are not dead as men. They still bear God's image. They are still moral, rational, responsible creatures. However miserable in their unregenerate state they are not irresponsibly dead. God deals with them as responsible . . . This is the root of the matter and the reason why it is necessary to be clear about *common grace* (my emphasis - DE). It cannot be too strongly stressed that we speak to men *as men*. They are not tables and chairs or cups and saucers. They are very much alive, very much alive toward a world without God," ("The Free Offer," p. 15). The power of the offer-idea will irresistibly sweep away the truth of total depravity in the direction of free will, through the channel, no doubt, of the notion that fallen men "still bear God's image" because of "common grace."

(to be continued)

3 This is made plain in Carl Bangs' recent book, sympathetic to the Arminians, *Arminius* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1971).

ALL AROUND US

Cooperation Between Christian Reformed and Rome

Prof. H. Hanko

We quote the following news item which appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* and which was reprinted in the *News Bulletin* of the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen. It gives an example of how far ecumenicity has gone among some Christian Reformed congregations.

Listen to the services in some of the church buildings in the Detroit area on a Sunday morning and you may wonder where you are.

A number of religious groups are sharing buildings — and sometimes services — in order to save money and offer a variety of types of worship.

“We have a structured community working on the church of tomorrow today,” says the Rev. John Malestein, pastor of the North Hills Christian

Reformed Church, 3150 N. Adams in Troy.

He is vice-president of the North Suburban Parish, a grouping of nine Troy-area Protestant and Catholic Churches.

The Troy churches conduct joint camps, retreats and education programs led by Catholic nuns and Protestant clergy.

They also hold special liturgies together at Easter, Thanksgiving and for anniversaries of pastors or congregations.

For instance, a baptism rite for two infants and two adults in St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church last spring had the hands of clergy from Episcopal, American Lutheran, Christian Reformed, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches dipping into the water.

Comments On The Film Arts

Sometime ago I lectured in South Holland on the subject of “The Christian And The Film Arts.” This lecture was later published, with some modifications, in a pamphlet by the same name. In a paragraph on page 6, I wrote:

The question which is of concern to us is: Is there not a deeper objection against movies? An objection which condemns them out of hand?

Before we answer this, we must make a careful distinction between different kinds of the film arts. In one class must be placed home movies which record delightful experiences in the life of a family, educational films, travelogues, etc. In another class must be placed all movies which are dramatic presentations. It is bad logic to lump all movies together into one class. To the first class we have no objections. It is with the second class that we have our quarrel. . . .

A reader of our *Standard Bearer* in British Columbia has recently read this pamphlet and has sent a letter in which he takes exception to what I

have written. The matter which he brings up is an important one and worth some comment in our column. He writes:

In the booklet “The Christian And the Film Arts” . . . we read on page 6: “To the first class we have no objections.” Maybe this could be said when the booklet first was written, which I doubt very much. It is a very dangerous generalization. The *world* produces these movies! Do not we hold that the *world* produces evil? Do not we say, “there is no common grace”?

Be assured that “educational” movies and “travelogues” picture a *false* picture. These movies are used by Satan to pervert the masses, including those who call themselves Christians. All communications media are in the hands of the evil one today.

Educational movies and travelogues subtly brainwash the masses into believing the three great hoaxes: Darwinism, Marxism, and Freudianism. Observe these movies critically, and you will soon see

this. The famous "National Geographic Magazine" I wish to mention here also. It, too, is *dangerous trash*. Full of lies and ungodliness.

Have you seen the book "The Emergence of Man" advertised? This is an overt example of what I am hinting at. We are shown a group of natives crawling among, and arising up from among tall grass. Someone with poor vision could easily mistake the picture for a pride of lions in an Afrikaans veld.

How many of our people buy these books? It is high time to warn our people.

We must stress purity of doctrine, indeed. We also must stress purity of life, separation from the world. We must guard against all of Satan's ruses.

There are a couple of comments about this which will, I think, clarify the matter considerably.

In the first place, our correspondent misses the point which I was making in the pamphlet. When I stated "To the first class we have no objections," I was referring specifically to all movies which are not dramatic productions, and against which no *principle* objection could be made. The thrust of the argument was especially that the film arts which are dramatic productions do not belong to the area of Christian liberty. They are wrong *per se* because drama is wrong. All these dramatic productions are evil whether they appear in the local theatre, on the television screen, or on the stage in live productions. They must be condemned on the basis of God's Word. They are not a legitimate form of entertainment for the Christian.

But there are other movies which are not dramatic

productions. These include travelogues, home movies, educational films, etc. They are not *per se* wrong. They cannot be condemned on the grounds that it is always evil to make a movie of children romping in the back yard, or of scenes in some foreign country. They cannot be lumped together with dramatic productions and condemned out of hand. It is in this sense that I made the remark: "To the first class we have no objection."

Nevertheless, for the rest, we agree with our correspondent. It is certainly true that even travelogues and educational films can, when made by ungodly men, be instruments of ungodly philosophy and propaganda. They can be, and often are, means whereby the masses are pumped full of worldly philosophy with its Satanic world-and-life-view. The dangers against which the above letter warns are very real and not imaginary. And the warning is much to the point. I have seen travelogues which, in their very presentation, gave approval to idolatry. I have seen educational films which are primarily education in evolutionism. Our people should certainly be much more sensitive to these things than sometimes they are. This is especially true because this propaganda can sometimes be so very subtle that it is difficult to detect even when one is alert to it. And this makes it all the more dangerous.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to make a good movie which includes drama. It is possible to make a good home movie, a good travelogue, a good educational film. We may not condemn non-dramatic movies out of hand. We must carefully evaluate them. And we must reject that which is evil.

News Items From The Church World

Louis Cassels, UPI Senior Religious editor, has recently written a series of articles on religion in America. A recent column, syndicated in many newspapers, and appearing in the *Grand Rapids Press*, makes mention of the Churches of Reformed persuasion. The pertinent paragraphs are as follows:

Four important U.S. denominations with a total membership of about 700,000 trace their ancestry to the Dutch Reformed Church founded in the Netherlands during the 16th Century by followers of John Calvin.

The American offspring of this ancient Protestant body are, in order of size, the Reform (sic) Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, the Netherlands Reformed Congregations and the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

They came to America with the first Dutch settlers

and, naturally, gained their earliest foothold in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, which later became New York. Today, the largest concentration of Reformed Congregations is found in Michigan.

* * * * *

According to *Christian News* the conservatives in the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod are seeking a division of their denomination. Although the conservatives won a smashing victory in their recent Synod in New Orleans, many are suspicious that the officials in the Church are not doing all they can nor moving fast enough to implement these decisions. Particularly, many complain that the liberalism and heresy in Concordia Seminary is not being rooted out with sufficient dispatch. Hence, since time is on the side of the liberals, many fear that the victories

gained in New Orleans will be lost after all.

* * * * *

Carl McIntyre is still having his troubles with the government. Although he has a large network of stations over which he broadcasts, his key station, WXUR in Media, Pennsylvania, was recently closed by the Federal Communications Commission on the grounds that McIntyre did not abide by the rules of the so-called Fairness Doctrine. Though McIntyre appealed his case all the way to the Supreme Court, he did not succeed in getting his station back on the air.

He has since then purchased an old minesweeper which he has now anchored off the coast on the eastern seaboard. He intends to broadcast from this boat outside the limits of the sovereignty of the United States and thus, in his opinion, outside the jurisdiction of the government. He is having his problems however. First, technical difficulties delayed his broadcasting. Then, after a few hours of

broadcasting, he was forced to quit because his radio signal was interfering with other stations and he had to seek a new wavelength. Now his program is already in the courts and his right to broadcast from international waters is being challenged by the government.

While we do not sympathize with the views which Rev. McIntyre promotes, we nevertheless consider it a grave injustice that the government has silenced his station. His contention that the government permits every conceivable form of liberalism and godlessness to be broadcasted without interference and only vents its wrath on conservative broadcasts, is a legitimate one. And, no doubt, this is but the harbinger of another day when the government will shut down all broadcasting which is in any way conservative theologically.

In the meantime, *Christianity Today* reports that McIntyre is in deep financial trouble and is barely able to keep up payments of his vast and far-flung program.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH:

Christian Liberty (3)

Rev. J. Kortering

We may conclude from our previous articles that the subject of Christian liberty is of importance to young people for two reasons. The first is that it is so relevant to their lives. Because they are young, they stand at the forefront of change which gives rise to spiritual evaluation. Young people must constantly determine what is permissible under Christian liberty and what has to be rejected as sinful. The second reason is that such a decision is crucial for their whole life. If a young person fails to make proper discernment, but justifies sin under the pretense of Christian liberty, he sets the direction of his entire life wrongfully. If he makes a proper judgment, he sets his feet upon the pathway that leads unto life eternal. What can be of more importance to covenant young people?

GROWING UP

The days of youth are awkward. One is too old to be a child and too young to be an adult. Acne soon gives way to the smooth texture so coveted by all and

promised by every concoction imaginable. Lanky arms soon become proportioned. The cracking voice reaches the penetrating highs and booming lows. By the marvel of body chemistry the young man soon stands at the apex of human strength and the young woman adorned in her pristine beauty.

Changes are not only physical, however. Far more subtly, one changes inside. The dependent little Johnny soon gets up in the morning and discovers that he has his own ideas about things. The child that lets mother and father do all the thinking suddenly becomes the young person who realizes that he has to do his own thinking. The soul of youth becomes flooded with waves of questions. The simple trust that a child has in the judgment of adults is replaced with suspicion. A younger person begins to wonder why people act the way they do. They question the motives of parents and every one close to them. They begin to feel pinched by the "oppression" of others always telling them what to do, what to think, what to feel, what to say, and so on. Suspicion gives way to

doubt, and a young person begins to wonder whether anyone really knows what is right. Their tender lives become shaken by the Pharisaism they see. They hear gossip and learn how people hurt one another. They begin to come face to face with the hard realities of life. Their first reaction is to reject it all. Sometimes they like to climb into a cocoon. Some rebel against anyone who would tell them anything. Others throw off all piety, claiming it is just a sham anyway. These are the restless years.

The soul has to grow up just as well as the body.

During this process, young people are very vulnerable. If parents don't seem to be patient enough, they simply turn them off. If preachers try to help, they are accused of meddling. If school counselors can't come up with the instant solution, they just don't have it. They realize that their life is at sea, but they can't seem to find the haven of rest.

The devil likes to capitalize on this stage of human development. In case he hasn't gotten a child under his control as a child, he pretty much waits until these difficult years. When a young person is confused by trying to measure the values he has been taught over against the values of the unbelieving world, the devil considers this fertile ground. If he can get a young person to isolate himself from those who are trying to guide him through the turmoil, he has him to himself. If he can get parents to give up and to consider the task of guidance too difficult and not worth all the trouble, then again, he has youth to himself to do his devilish business.

Parents and young people must recognize that they need each other.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

All this has direct bearing upon our subject.

Something that is blatantly sinful is one thing. A young person can be shown from God's Word that this is wrong, and they pretty much accept it and can come to grips with it as the Holy Spirit leads them to understand it. Things which are questionable, something which is common place in society and sometimes common place within the sphere of the church, but which is forbidden by parents or by the minister in his dealings with youth, present quite a different problem. Things which don't seem so bad and hardly cause concern to a young person, but which are nevertheless rejected by parents and the practice of which is therefore forbidden, cause quite a stir in the home. Is it worth it all? Is it necessary? Won't young people just learn to make the judgment as to what is sinful and what is permitted under Christian liberty on their own? They might make a few mistakes, but, after all, they have to "sow wild oats." Why get all hung up on Christian liberty?

Scripture indicates that parents have no choice but to guide their children also in making judgments as it applies to Christian liberty. All the exhortations of the Bible emphasize that parents are to train up their children in the way that they should go. This is their calling!

And how can they do this?

Parents should realize first of all that they have to function as the conscience of their children, and this includes young people. A parent fails in his calling when he thinks for one moment that his teen-ager is able to make his own decisions and doesn't need help. Some teen-agers like to think this, but every parent should know better. Youth need guidance in the restless years. Most young people recognize this also. They are scared of life, scared of making the wrong decisions, afraid that they aren't getting things straight. They need *strong* parents, they want to test their own position by that of their parents. Parents should understand that when young people argue, show anger, sometimes defy authority, they are really crying out for help. If we knuckle down under this kind of pressure we only tell our young people that we don't have the strength to stand up under pressure and that we are not trustworthy. If we do this, our young people lose all respect for us, and no wonder. If we as parents are ready to discuss, eager to show concern, have a big shoulder to take criticism without getting angry, have a heart that is large enough to forgive and sincere enough to encourage in the right way, our young people will consider the home a place of refuge and there will be a seeking out of one another.

With such a proper relationship in the home, parents will be in a position to guide their children in Christian liberty. The role of the church is to spell out the teachings of the Word of God. By the preaching of the Word, by catechism study, by discussion in society, the church must spell out what God required of us in our Christian life. The principles of the Word of God must come through loud and clear. The church doesn't have to make a long list of pronouncements of do's and don'ts, spelling out what is sinful and what comes under Christian liberty. This would be wrong. Rather, by instruction, the truth of doctrine and life has to be spelled out and *taught*. It is the duty of the home to implement these teachings. This is the role of the parent. Every parent must take seriously the preaching of the Word and apply this to home life. First, this means that every *individual* must take it seriously. Parents and children must know Christ by faith and have the sincere desire to glorify God by being faithful to Him in their daily life. Then parents are ready to make these demands of their children and young people. Young people will also be ready to

accept their guidance, for they will appreciate that maturity and experience makes them qualified.

Even then it makes a lot of difference how a parent does this. As parents we should recognize that when we deal with young children, we must command them. As they get older, however, they must learn to make their own decisions. Young people must be respected as *young people*. They want to be taught how to make their own decisions. It won't work simply to tell them no, *because I told you so*. They must understand that they don't want to do wrong for good reasons and we must give them reasons. It may be that a young person isn't persuaded by those reasons, but then he must be told to trust the judgment of parents and be patient until such a time as he may come to appreciate it. Young people must do this too. Spiritual maturity doesn't come over night; it comes through a long battle of testing the spirits whether they be of God.

DRAWING THE LINE

If we are guided by the principles of Scripture and take seriously our calling as parents and covenant youth, we will understand the need for drawing a line, establishing a boundary for Christian liberty.

Take dress for example. We know that the youth culture extols nudity for sinful sexual arousal, which is fornication. There are beaches in Europe and America on which one can appear stark naked. This may be the ultimate goal of sensuality. The Christian knows he must clothe his body. Out of Christian liberty we try to determine how much clothing is proper. The point is that parents and young people have to sit down and decide where to draw the line between a clothed body and a naked body. The trend of wickedness is toward scantier and scantier dress until it reaches outright nakedness. We all agree nakedness is wrong. If our attitude is to go along with the times, then every year our covenant young people

will appear with a still briefer swim suit. This then is no more Christian liberty. It is going along with the sinful drive for nudity and fornication. With this reasoning, we must make our judgment as to proper swim wear.

The same holds true for music, sports, hair, etc. We first have to extricate ourselves from the mad rush of the children of this world, examine what we must do as children of God, and make a decision in the service of God.

By doing this we must learn that as young people we will be different from the majority in many things. This difference will not only be from young people in the world, but also within the church. Young people that are always introducing into the sphere of the church the latest styles of clothing, hair, music, entertainment, etc. should be held in suspect. Who are we following, Christ or antichrist? Who are our idols, the wicked rock singers? Or are we imitators of Jesus Christ? Parents and young people who are always in the lead with questionable practices only indicate that they are more interested in being popular with the world than growing up in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Christian liberty is freedom, all right. That freedom doesn't make one popular with the world. If it does we have to examine the depth of it. There is something wrong when the world wants us to be their friends. If we are faithful in walking in the liberty of Jesus Christ, we will show ourselves as the enemies of the world. That is not something to be abhorred, but it is the privilege of covenant young people. For to be an enemy of the world is to be a friend of God.

If young people learn these lessons in the days of their youth, they will be prepared to live this way all their life. Our lives will not be self-centered, but God-centered.

This is what makes covenant youth so beautiful.

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STUDIES IN ISAIAH

Consequences of Israel's Apostasy

(Isa. 1:5-9)

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

I. Israel, Unreformed, Threatened with Punishment. "Whereupon can ye be stricken any more, increasing turning away?" (v. 5), i.e., going on, heaping apostasy to apostasy. If their purpose had been to make themselves abjectly miserable, they could not have more thoroughly succeeded. Upon what part of them can they stand another blow? They have been beaten black and blue over every inch of their bodies. "The whole head is diseased, the whole heart sick." Outwardly and inwardly the whole nation has been so badly beaten under the wrath of God that it is like a crushed worm. On the body of the nation there is nothing left on which to mete out more strokes.

Conditions were such in the church that true religion and spiritual life were expiring, and hypocrisy, worldliness and every kind of abominable wickedness were increasing. An incurable disease had long spread throughout the church because its ministers and officers had long neglected to check the progress of corruption. Today, the church has been swept and garnished with an ultra-charism, wherein, already long before the day of judgment, many claim, "Lord! Lord! have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out demons?" The modern charismatic movement, with its sickly, subjective, super-piety and its subtle heresy of extremes beyond faith, of the mind of the Spirit beyond Scripture, is also involved in the same sodomitical abominations the prophets condemned. God's covenant of marriage is horribly corrupted. Divorce and remarriage are permitted on any grounds whatever. The terms "biblical" and "unbiblical divorce" we are advised to drop as at best confusing. It is only another slippery step to the sanction of the abhorrent evil of homosexuality in the church, with the demand of lifting censure against it, and licensure of its perverted appetites. Its bold anarchistic claim is that satisfaction of its vile lechery may sometimes be necessary, and that no veto of it from the side of the law is to be tolerated. Such things you find expressed

not in a secret Satanism society, but in the church world.

It is hopeless, when as to the whole body politic, head and heart have become ulcerated and are putrefying. But wherever there is resemblance to these infamous crimes, so they will be notorious for suffering the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah. Conditions in the state are as Charles H. Spurgeon once expressed it, "The letting off of certain atrocious murderers of late, and the easy way in which certain criminals have escaped, makes us all demand a little more vigorous dispensation of justice, or else we shall have our land made a pandemonium," (Treast. OT, 3, 397). Calvin also warned, "Hence, we ought to learn that, when God begins to punish us, if we do not repent, He does not immediately desist, but multiplies the chastisements, and continually follows them up with other afflictions. We ought, therefore, to abstain from such obstinacy, if we do not wish to draw down upon ourselves the same punishments, or at least to deserve the same reproach which was brought against the Jews, that though they had received sharp warnings, and had felt the hand of God, still they could not be corrected or reformed."

II. Israel, Depraved, a Mass of Corruption. "From the sole of the foot even to the head, nothing in it of soundness: a wound and a stripe (singular, as in 53:5. The body has had so many stripes so closely laid on it that it is now one stripe, one massive wound throughout), and a fresh wound; they have not been pressed together, nor bound up, nor softened with ointment," (v. 6). This reminds us of Job, covered with sore boils, and of David who said, "My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness" (Ps. 38:5). There is very close connection, as David shows, between suffering and sin. The relation between the two is that of effect and cause. It is the same relation between pain and corruption. Sin is the great mischief-maker.

(to be continued)

News From Our Churches

October 13, 1973

Hope's bulletin, which, by the way, is a usual source of general church news for this column, reported that "Classis East as it met in Hudsonville this past week will be long remembered because of the events which occurred there." One of the events mentioned was that "the congregation of Prospect Park, New Jersey, was officially accepted as being one with us." The congregation there wasted no time in forming a trio and calling a minister. From the trio, which included Rev. D. Engelsma, Rev. J. Kortering, and Candidate M. Hoeksema, our Prospect Park Protestant Reformed Church extended the call to Rev. Engelsma.

The other event which made the last session of Classis East a memorable one, was the examination and approval of Faith Church's pastor-elect, Candidate M. Joostens. Two days later (Friday, October 6), in the Jenison Christian Junior High School, the current meeting place of the Faith Congregation, the ordination and installation service was held and Candidate Joostens became the newest minister of the Word in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

In other news, we learn that Candidate M. Hoeksema, who is still assisting Rev. Lubbers in the work in Jamaica, has accepted the call from our Forbes congregation. Rev. G. Van Baren is considering the call to serve as minister in our South Holland congregation. Rev. D. Engelsma reported that one of his services in Houston was attended by 75-80 people. October 14 was Rev. Engelsma's third and final Sunday in that area. Prof. H. Hanko, we learn from Randolph's bulletin, has agreed to spend a weekend in "Skowhegan, Maine, on behalf of the Mission Committee, to investigate the situation there." And, from First Church's bulletin . . . "the Mission Committee has decided to discontinue labors in Philadelphia for the present."

* * * * *

Each of the foregoing news items is, in its own right, not only of great interest, but also of obvious significance. Our final item is, perhaps, one of even more profound significance. We refer, of course, to the installation of a third professor in our seminary. The service was held in First Church of Grand Rapids on Wednesday, October 3. That the event was considered to be a notable one, was evident from the

size of the audience, which included, incidentally, not only people of the Grand Rapids area, but also a number of individuals from rather distant churches. Since Classis East had met that day, a couple of representatives from our New Jersey Church were in Grand Rapids and could attend the installation service. In addition, the service was attended by a number of members of the two congregations in which Rev. Decker had formerly served as pastor. Some, then, travelled from South Holland, Illinois; and we understand that five families came in a van from Doon, Iowa, in order to witness that installation. (Tapes of the service, incidentally, are available, at \$2.50, from Rev. G. Van Baren.)

In a beautiful tribute to Rev. Decker in the Farewell Program at South Holland, the consistory there noted, that, "it seems only such a short time ago that Professor Hoeksema installed Reverend Decker into his office here in South Holland. At that time, Professor Hoeksema made mention of the fact that the lights in the study would be required to burn far into the night. We feel that these lights have burned much during the past four years and that as a result, our congregation has been richly blessed."

Rev. Decker, now Professor of Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, will no doubt continue to burn study lights far into the night, for he must continue to work in what Professor Hanko called "another aspect of the official preaching of the gospel." Professor Hanko based his sermon, that night, on II Timothy 2:15. He noted that the instructions given by Paul to Timothy carried "a sense of urgency, for the days in which Timothy was called to work in Ephesus were, from many points of view, evil days — days characterized by indifference to and hatred of sound doctrine." And, Professor Hanko continued, "if that was urgent in Timothy's day, it is increasingly urgent in our day."

It's that urgency, certainly, which underscores the gravity and difficulty of the task to which Professor Decker is called. The task is, in fact, such that "no man by his own strength can possibly perform it." But the task assigned to him is "assigned by Christ, and Him alone." I'm sure, Professor Hanko stated, "that Rev. Decker is ready to assume his place as professor of theology in our seminary only because of the fact that there is no escaping the appointment of

(continued on back page)

Christ. Christ calls with a calling that cannot be declined." And then, too, that task which is otherwise humanly impossible, becomes possible "by the power of Christ."

Professor Hanko acknowledged that "it is a very great blessing that the Lord has preserved us for nearly 50 years in the truth of the Scriptures." And he added that "that gives to us in the Seminary the responsibility to see to it that that Word of Truth continues to be rightly divided." Involved in that is our responsibility to "be servants of the Word completely . . . to bow before the Word completely . . . as little children . . . We never, we never, we never grow beyond being little children when it comes to the Word of God. That's the only way to hear, the only way to understand."

And then, directing his final remarks particularly to our new professor, Prof. Hanko advised, "Take that Word of God with you into our school, for the sake of the church whom God loves, and because you labor, not for any goals in this world but on behalf of the Kingdom which shall dawn when Christ comes."

The sermon was powerful, the installation itself, thrilling, and the social hour which followed, enjoyable. It all added up to what one bulletin predicted would be a "happy occasion."

And the end result of it all, is that I went off the back page again. Of course, the picture below (which also appeared on the printed program of the Installation Service) doesn't help matters any. How about it, Mr. Editor-in-Chief, am I excused?

D.D.



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