

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

It is quite conceivable that, on Thanksgiving Day, we exalt ourselves in sinful pride, boast in the things we possess and enjoy, attribute them to our deepest heart to our own ingenuity and efforts, thus boast in our own worthiness, while, perhaps, we acknowledge that the Lord came in to assist and to crown our worthy efforts, and thus, imagining that we can remunerate the Lord of all for all His benefits. . . . Thanksgiving does, indeed, imply joy and gladness of heart, but not in the abundance of earthly things, but in God Who is really GOD, the Lord of all, Who reigneth in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, Who doeth all things well; Who is, moreover, the God of our salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord, Who forgiveth all our iniquities, Who healeth all our diseases, and from Whose fatherly hand we receive all things, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, health and sickness, joy and sorrow, life and death, and Who causes all things to work for our salvation.

— *Standard Bearer*, Vol. XXIII, p. 97

MEDITATION

The Saving Grace of God

Rev. M. Schipper

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;"

Titus 2:11, 12

Obviously our text is not a complete sentence. It ends in a semicolon; which means that more is following. The complete thought includes also the verses 13 and 14. To these verses we will call attention, the Lord willing, in our next Meditation. What we must see now is the truth that the grace of God teaches us how to live in the present world. What we will see next time is: that this same grace of God makes us to hope for the final appearance of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The little conjunction "for" which introduces our text expresses the ground or reason for the entire preceding context. Not merely is our text connected to the two verses which immediately precede it, as some insist; but the text serves as ground for all that the apostle writes from the beginning of the chapter.

Titus is exhorted to speak that which becomes sound doctrine. He is to speak it in such a way that it applies to all: aged men and aged women, young women and young men, to servants in relation to their own masters. In the concluding verse of this chapter Titus is exhorted to speak the Word and exhort with all authority.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men!

For that reason and on this ground he is to preach the Word with authority to all!

The grace of God, that is, the grace that bringeth salvation, has appeared!

Most generally the grace of God is conceived of as unmerited favor. And we have no objection to this explanation of grace as such. It can be shown from Scripture that grace does have this interpretation. It must also certainly be admitted that whatever is implied as coming to us of grace is surely favor that is unmerited. We do, however, object when it is maintained that unmerited favor is the sole meaning of grace. We even insist that unmerited favor is not

the fundamental idea of grace. We further insist that grace is a more comprehensive concept than is expressed in unmerited favor.

In Scripture in general, and in the text in particular, the fundamental idea of grace is beauty.

Grace is that goodness of God according to which He is beautiful and lovely in Himself.

When the Word of God speaks of God as the gracious God, as it so often does, the Word of God reflects, first of all, on the beauty and loveliness of God Himself. Apart from any relationship He may have with the creature, God is everlastingly the good and beautiful God. Though no man by searching can find out God so as to comprehend Him, for He is a great deep; nevertheless all the searching into His holy self-revelation will only produce a good and beautiful God. Negatively and reverently speaking, there is nothing that is ugly and repulsive in Him. In one word, He is the beauteous, infinitely perfect One.

When God reveals Himself to the creature, all that the creature can say is: How beautiful Thou art!

This is the grace of God in God Himself.

Moreover, when God gives His grace to the creature, it is His design to draw that creature to Himself in favor, whereby He blesses him and gives him beauty and glory, even though the creature is most undeserving, guilty, and corrupt.

This is the grace of God for the creature!

Undoubtedly it is this grace of God to which the text refers. The grace of God is that grace of which He is the sole possessor and dispenser. Grace therefore has its source and fountain head in God. If there is any grace revealed in the world, it must come from Him. That it is the grace of God, means that He is the one Who bestows it. It is His gift. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8.

The grace that bringeth salvation!

The words "that bringeth" are commentary, and inserted by the translator. There can be no serious objection to the translation provided that we do not conclude two separate ideas here: grace and salvation. Literally we read: "For the grace of God, salvation to all men, hath appeared." Very plainly the apostle identifies salvation with grace. In other words, he says, "the grace of God which is salvation, hath appeared, etc." The meaning is: the grace of God which realizes salvation, the purpose of which is to make us beautiful as God is beautiful, hath appeared.

O, you knew it all the time, that this grace of God which realizes salvation has appeared in and through Christ Jesus, and through the Spirit of Christ. Of this the apostle speaks in the verses to which we call attention next time. Now, however, we must point out that the central appearance of the grace that saves is in the cross, the cross of Christ. There He redeems us by His precious blood. There He ransomed us from all iniquity. And by the Spirit of Christ this grace of God is sanctified to us. Not only does it appear objectively in the cross, but it also appears subjectively in our hearts and in all God's people.

As we have pointed out before in another connection, this grace which realizes salvation is threefold. It is for us. It is in us. And it is through us, that is, it works in our spiritual consciousness so that we react to it. Though all three are inseparable, yet the latter receives the emphasis in our text. This is plain when we consider next what this grace of salvation does.

Negatively, it teaches us to say: No!

O, indeed, saving grace teaches us! It is a pedagogue. Like the teacher who instructs small children, so the grace of God, which saves, instructs us with good and practical doctrine. We are the children who must be taught, that is, the church of Christ, including Paul and Titus. Always the church is subject to the pedagogy of the grace of God which realizes salvation. There is no time when you graduate from the class. Never does the instruction cease. All our life long we are in the school of the Spirit of grace.

That we are taught to say No, first of all, is implied in the statement "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts." What we have here concretely is the doctrine of the antithesis. And this doctrine is as old as Paradise the first. You remember how God introduced this doctrine for the first when He placed man before the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. To the one (the tree of life) man was to say: Yes; and to the other (the tree of knowledge of good and evil) man was to say: No. After the fall man could no longer speak as he should.

In fact, even his speech was in reverse. Since the fall man says continually No to God; and he says Yes to evil. When grace which saves makes its appearance, we are taught to change our speech, as well as our lives. We are taught to say No to all ungodliness.

Ungodliness, as the word suggests, signifies what is thoroughly characteristic of the natural man, namely, that he will have nothing to do with God. Sometimes the word is translated: "impious". Ungodliness is the withholding from God His due. It implies a standing in open opposition and rebellion against God.

To this the apostle adds: "and worldly lusts." Naturally when man forsakes God, he goes to craving that which God has forbidden. It is the desire for what the world under sin proffers.

In respect to these, ungodliness and worldly lusts, grace teaches us to say emphatically: No! Grace hates all that is ugly, profane, and worldly. And it reveals this hatred in emphatically and consciously speaking against it.

Positively grace teaches us to say: Yes!

Not only does grace teach us to live antithetically, but also thetically. We must not only learn to say No to the evil; but we must also learn to say Yes to that which is good, the beautiful, the divine; to that which is pleasing to God, and in harmony with His gracious being and will.

This we do, first of all, by living soberly. And this must mean that we live temperately and discreetly, with a sound mind, and with complete control over our senses. Secondly, we are taught to live righteously, that is, justly, agreeably to the law of rectitude, and of what is right. Thirdly, we are taught to live godly, piously, in reverence with respect to God. In one word, it means to be God-like; and as God is beautiful, so are we to be beautiful in all our living.

And that, so long as we live in the present world!

Here the apostle does not have in mind the cosmological world, the world of creation, in distinction from heaven. Though, of course, it is true we also live in this created world. Rather, he has in mind the world from the point of view of this age, as it lies under the power of sin and darkness, the world as it develops in sin and wickedness.

In that world we live. It is in that world that the new life of saving grace must come to manifestation, as it expresses itself in our Yes and No. In that world we are to live the life that flows to us through the grace that saves, the life that is pleasing to God, that reflects His beauty over-against all that is ugly, evil, and corrupt.

This is the calling of all who have received the saving grace of God!

That this saving grace of God hath appeared unto all men, cannot mean, as the Arminian would have it, that God gives this saving grace to all men individually and universally. Against this philosophy all Scripture but also our text violently militates.

It should be abundantly clear that the grace of God is never common, but extremely particular. It beautifies only those to whom it is given in the sovereign good pleasure of God.

Here, as always in Scripture, the "all men" must be determined by the context in which these words are found.

If you look back into the context, you discover that the "all men" refers to all classes of men. They are enumerated for us as, "old men and old women" (vss. 2, 3), "young men and young women" (vss. 4-8), "servants and masters" (vss. 9, 10).

To all these classes of men Titus is commanded to preach and to teach with authority, because in

respect to all classes of men the gospel is to come, in which appears the good news of the saving grace of God. And the divine reason is that God has His people not only among the rich, but also the poor; not only among the enlightened, but also the ignorant; not only among the aged, but also the young; not only among the masters, but also the servants or slaves.

And so in the multiforimity of the church which God is gathering out of every nation, tribe, and tongue, there shall shine in rich variations the beauteous grace of God.

And when this present age is finished, and the counsel of God shall have been realized, there shall stand before Him a host which no man can number, and each one in that host reflecting to Him according to the capacity He has given, the wonderful grace of God.

And He shall forever be glorified!

EDITORIALS

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church- - An Encouraging Contact

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Late last summer I had the distinct privilege of having as a guest in my home for a few days the Rev. Charles Rodman, pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Launceston, Tasmania, Australia. Perhaps some of our readers will recall that in connection with my as yet unfinished series of editorials on "The Free Offer" I made reference to the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches and to their excellent pamphlet entitled "Universalism and the Reformed Churches: A Defense of Calvin's Calvinism." In this booklet they opposed the error of the "free offer." Up to this time we had had some contact with the brethren of these churches through correspondence and through an exchange of literature. During the summer, however, Rev. Rodman had an extended leave from his congregation and travelled to Canada, to our country, and to England and Scotland. It was a real joy to have him as our guest for a few days and to have the opportunity to become personally acquainted, to hear the rather amazing story of his denomination, to have fellowship with one another, to discuss various

matters of mutual interest and concern with respect to the truth of God's Word, and to lay some plans for future contact. In the course of the Rev. Rodman's visit some of our local ministers also had the opportunity to make his acquaintance and to learn about the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches. I believe that they will all join me in saying that it was a genuine pleasure to become acquainted with the Rev. Rodman, and that they will agree with me that we appear to have much in common.

I spoke of the "amazing story" of the origin of the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches. Prior to the Rev. Rodman's arrival, I had already received a cassette tape which told in detail the first part of this story. When Pastor Rodman was here, in his inimitable way — and I might add: his charming but sometimes difficult to understand Australian accent — he told us the whole story. Through the wonder of God's grace these brethren moved from the rankest Arminianism and decisionism to a soundly Reformed position, a position in which they are in essential agreement with us also as to the crucial subjects of common grace and

the free offer. I asked the Rev. Rodman while he was here whether I might tell that story in our *Standard Bearer*, and he gladly gave me permission to do so. Afterwards, however, I thought better of this, and decided that it would be more interesting for our readers to learn this story from the Rev. Rodman himself. I have, therefore, transcribed the tape which he had sent me, and I intend to publish this transcript in three installments, beginning in this issue. These three installments, however, will tell only the first part of this story. I hope that meanwhile either the Rev. Rodman or one of the other brethren in Tasmania will send us another tape with the conclusion of this story. I would rather have our readers get the story from them than receive it secondhand from me. However, I do not know whether that second tape will reach us in time to continue and conclude the story. For via one of the students of these churches Prof. Hanko recently learned that the Rev. Rodman suffered a heart attack, and will have to curtail his activities for some six months. We want Pastor Rodman to know that we remember him in our prayers. If it be the Lord's will, may He restore our brother to health and to his labors in the cause of His church and covenant.

The Rev. Rodman informed me that the brethren in Tasmania were as surprised to learn about us as we were to learn about them. They thought that they were all alone in their position in respect to common grace and the free offer, and they were amazed to learn about our churches and their history and to learn, in fact, that our denomination is older than theirs and had passed through the entire common grace free offer controversy long before they had. For this reason, we were assured, the brethren in Tasmania looked to us for instruction and help. They are very interested in what we have to say, and interested in our *Standard Bearer* and all our other literature. In fact, when Rev. Rodman and I paid a visit to our Business Manager, the Rev. Rodman thought that he had found a veritable gold mine; and while he was in Grand Rapids he made arrangements to have a goodly amount of our publications sent to his address in Tasmania. We were also assured that representatives of our churches would be heartily welcome in Tasmania, and that there would be opportunity for conferences, lectures, and preaching. Pastor Rodman gave me his personal assurances on this score; but he assured me that though he was not speaking officially for his churches, he was certain that they would welcome us. We therefore look forward to face-to-face contact with these brethren sometime in mid-1975, the Lord willing.

Some of our readers will recall that in an earlier issue I criticized a paragraph in the pamphlet to which I referred above. I criticized it because it

appeared as though the pamphlet wanted to hold on to the idea of common grace, while it wanted to reject the error of the free offer. I suggested that this was inconsistent. While he was visiting here, the Rev. Rodman discussed this matter with me; and I believe that we see eye to eye on this matter. After Mr. Rodman's departure, however, I received the May issue of *The Evangelical Presbyterian*, the quarterly magazine of these churches and I noticed that in this issue there is an editorial response to my criticism. Hence, rather than inform you about our discussion of this subject, I propose to publish that response and to make some comments about it. This, however, will have to wait until the following issue of the *Standard Bearer*. And now I invite you to enjoy the first installment of the Rev. Rodman's story.

The Birth Of The Evangelical Presbyterian Church

[The following is the first installment of the transcript of a recorded address on the above subject by the Rev. Charles Rodman, who will identify himself in the first part of this transcript. Rather than try to describe the story of these churches from memory, I thought it appropriate that we allow Rev. Rodman to tell the story himself. Responsibility for the transcript — paragraphing, punctuation, etc. — is mine. In one or two instances it was a bit difficult to understand the tape, but for the most part I believe the following transcript is accurate. HCH.]

Well, tonight, as promised, we are making this recording concerning the Birth of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, formerly known as the Reformed Evangelical Church. The speaker, for those who are listening, is the Reverend C. Rodman, minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Launceston, Tasmania. Tasmania is the southernmost state of Australia; it is an island state. It is not Tanzania, in case you should confuse it, but Tasmania. Well, I suppose we ought to start somewhere; and perhaps we ought to start with events before what led up to the formation of this church. It is wonderful tonight to have you young people in this congregation, as it is your meeting; and you will perhaps learn something tonight because of what we have gone through. It will save you learning in the same manner in which we had to learn, and that was the hard way.

Nearly all the foundation members of the church belonged to an undenominational meeting known as the Ambassadors for Christ. This body conducted Saturday night meetings in the various centers in Tasmania. They called it "the brightest spot in town." They also conducted youth camps, evangelistic campaigns. Sometimes they conducted three or four of these large campaigns every year,

when they invited a speaker either from the mainland or from overseas. The meeting consisted of bright and breezy singing, with whipped up testimonies, whipped up hymns and choruses; and there were stirring testimonies, and then a stirring message; and after that there was a long appeal for people to make their decisions for Christ. And for those who had made their decisions, then there was an appeal for those who had back-slidden to be restored; and for those who had been restored, there was another appeal for the second blessing, or the overcoming life, of the crucified life, or something like that — one or the other. It merely meant, of course, that everybody ended up, if they were at the back, they ended up at the front. Now this movement commenced in approximately 1939. As I have said, it consisted of people from all the various denominations, and it went on for approximately twenty years.

It was during the last years of this movement that the majority of the leaders were concerned about the dreadful fallout of these meetings and these campaigns. Although God in His great mercy brought many souls to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet the leaders who were in responsible positions were concerned about people who had made these so-called decisions for Christ, that their last state was worse than the first. Under the pressure of strong appeals, the people made responses. That is, they would come out to the front. They would put up their hands first, then they would stand up, then they would come out to the front. And they would be taken away in some room; they were asked whether they would receive the Lord Jesus into their heart, and if they said yes, they would utter a prayer and they would sign a card; and they took their card home, and a copy was kept. But what happened, that many of those who made these decisions, their last state, as I said, was worse than the first?

Under the pressure of these strong appeals many of the folks were emotionally disturbed. And under the pressure of the preacher and the long drawn out appeals they went out to the front. But the next day, when their emotions had subsided, they believed that they had made fools out of themselves. And we found that if ten people went on in the faith, ninety of these people who made such professions — they went back. And the reason for all this was laid at the door of the churches. They, of course, were not geared to cope with people looking for somewhat of a theatrical, evangelical kind of meeting. But after ten years of the most enthusiastic activism, we found there were some unhealthy signs that appeared. And it was a strong indication that something was wrong. People were having nervous breakdowns. Many of the people who made these so-called decisions, as we said before, were untouchable. People had gone out to the

front, and therefore they were claiming that there was nothing in it. They said that they did all we had said to do, and it didn't work. And the fallout was so bad that in the end we found it very difficult even to get people to go to these campaigns — never mind whatever stunt that you might put on to attract them. Those who often made their decisions or professed to be converted, they often brought reproach upon the gospel, because the way they lived was not a Christian life. Their work mates just laughed at them; and then, of course, when they returned to their own ways, even their work mates thought there was nothing in Christianity. Hence, not only was it a hindrance to the persons themselves, but also what they did was a hindrance to others.

And then there were the workers, who prayed for the extension of the kingdom of Christ: they were becoming very disappointed and discouraged. When, I suppose, they were at their lowest ebb, an American evangelist came to the state, who was a follower of Charles G. Finney. He brought with him, he thought, the recipe for revival; and, of course, we all thought, "Well, something new; it might revive us again." But whilst this did stir up the energies of those fatigued and bewildered workers, finally they found that after about twelve months they were left in a sort of hopeless state of legalism and despair. Having supposedly experienced every religious blessing that was hawked around by all manner of evangelists, we now found ourselves in a wilderness of confusion. And I can say from bitter experience that Arminianism leads to atheism.

It was the mercy of God that brought us to the end of the road and gave us the grace to be honest, to face up to ourselves and to ask God to deliver us from this state, whatever the cost may be. And about that time there was an old lady who used to attend these meetings. She said she had a book, and the author was a great preacher. And she thought that book would be a help to us. The book was entitled "Religious Affections," and it was Jonathan Edwards' treatise on that subject. Now all of the group had undergone remarkable conversions. However, when we heard about this man Jonathan Edwards, and how that God had blessed him, and how that there had been a gracious revival of the Spirit of God under his ministry, we thought perhaps that in that book was the key to our problem, or perhaps to a revival. But on reading the introduction of this old copy, we found that what had happened in New England was exactly what had happened in our own island state, that whilst we were so busy under the notion of serving God (we thought we were serving God), we were in fact doing the work of Satan. We were in fact taken by the snare of the devil, who inspired us to use certain means to advance the work of God; but in the

end it brought the work of God into disgrace, because what we were doing was not in the Word of God to be done. And it was just the same as the devil did to Adam and Eve. He said to Adam and Eve, "If you will embark on this course, and do this, you'll become as God." And afterwards when they embarked upon it, of course, He showed them their nakedness. And after we embarked upon what we did, then we could see our nakedness — of all of what we had done. And it pleased God to use the expounding of the Scriptures in that book to reveal the true motives of our heart that lay beyond all our activism, all our getting to get people to make decisions, and conversions. We found that we were doing it because, when you had a certain number of people converted under your ministry, then, of course, you were looked upon as a great evangelist. And we, as we used to call it, liked to string as many fish as we could, to say that they were converted under our ministry. Well, I might say that many never doubted their conversion; but when Jonathan Edwards in that book explained the hopes of a Pharisee (and their hopes could never be shaken), while the hopes of a child of God could be so easily shaken because they wanted never to be deluded, wanted to enter into the kingdom of heaven — then this brought a tremendous reaction to the hearts of those who read it. In fact, one man who read that book tells us that he rolled on the study floor, crying to God that if he was deluded, it might please God to deliver him from that delusion.

But unfortunately this awakening (it was very subjective) was followed by long periods of darkness in the minds of those workers. In fact, one member honestly believed that he was the antichrist. And another one believed that he was Judas incarnate. One said he could not bear the awful darkness any longer. He went into the lounge where he had often wept before because of the awful dilemma which they had drifted into. And he prayed to God, Who, he believed, held his destiny in His hands. And he said to God: "I don't know if ever You could forgive me for what I've done, but You have the right to damn me. But if You cast me into the lowest hell, that is where I rightly belong; and I will still love You, for Your Self's sake." He said that when he opened his eyes, he expected to find himself in hell; but to his great amazement, he found himself kneeling on the lounge-room floor where he had previously commenced to pray.

That state continued in the lives of many of the leaders for a period of about four or five years. And it was only a miracle of grace that was able to deliver them from such a dilemma. But in the providence of God the works of John Owen were given to one of the members of this group. And then "Grace

Abounding," by John Bunyan, was another book that came into their hands. And another was the testimony of Walter Marshall. And when we read these volumes, we found that these men had passed through the same experience that we were going through. They spoke the same language. And God used that ministry of those old divines to speak to our hearts. One member read Martin Luther's preface to the Romans. Having read it, he prayed all night; and in the dawn of the morning he said the great truth of justification broke over his soul. He could see what he was doing. He could see that he was trying to appease God with his tears, and with his sorrow, and with his heartbreak. But then he realized that God had made satisfaction in Christ. And He was the only One in Whom righteousness could be obtained. And there and then he confessed to God what he had been doing. And peace came to his heart. But he said that on his way home he was thrown off again from walking by faith, and drifted into the dreadful despondency and darkness that he had been in for years. But the next time it came, it came a little longer; he walked in the light of it a little longer. It went again. It came back again. He grasped again by faith, and then gradually he could go for a week, and eventually he walked by faith and was delivered from that awful darkness.

It was during this time that the members of this group (there was a certain number of these members) could see that God was the Author of salvation. They did not understand all that that meant. But they could see that *they* had converted people before. And also they observed that the devil could imitate conversion. He could come along, and he could give people a legal fear. They would be absolutely terrified. And in the moment these people made their decisions there would be joy, and afterward there would be joy; but eventually that joy would leave.

But having seen that they had pressured people into making decisions they now ceased to make any public appeals in their preaching. They believed that if it is the work of conversion, it had to be the work of the Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus is the great Counsellor; and therefore it was the work of the Spirit to convict men of their sins, to regenerate men, and to bring them to a knowledge of the Redeemer. Other people weren't happy with that. Outside of the group there was another larger group who said, "Well, if ten people go on out of a hundred, at least we have ten." But the smaller group whom God had been dealing with said, "No, we would prefer rather than delude ninety, when we preach these other ten percent will be converted, and the other ninety percent won't be deluded." Now when they took that particular course, that is, not making any public appeals, no high pressure evangelism, then

immediately they lost their faith, because they couldn't produce a high rate of people making decisions for Christ. But it was during this particular period of time that it pleased God to bless their labors. And they saw such wonderful working of the Spirit of God and the grace of God in the lives of men through their preaching. I'm just thinking of just two occasions. One occasion was in the Taranna Church — what is now the Taranna Church, which was then, of course, not a church; it was only a group of people who had come away with their pastor. The people of that congregation said they didn't want their pastor, and the people who loved God went with him. The Reverend Hugh McNealy was the preacher. He was conducting a mission there, and I was assisting him. But one night after he preached, or during the sermon, the power of the Spirit of God and the glory of God came to that place. I suppose I'll never witness that again, maybe not until I reach glory. But that night the hearts of men and women were melted by the power of the Spirit of God. And after he had finished preaching, it was as though people were almost drunk. I still remember one man who was walking the aisle to go home, and I looked at him: he

didn't know where he was going. I spoke to him, and he said he wanted to get right with God. It was the Spirit of God convicting men of their sins. And people that night were converted to God, and those people went on. They are still in that congregation, which is now a congregation of our church.

On another occasion, the same minister was preaching in Winneleah. Some people there were unhappy, and they had formed a fellowship away from the church and used to go to the church on the Lord's day. They invited him to take a mission. It was during that mission, under the preaching of His Word, that the fire of God came on that district. And under the preaching of His Word, one man who was sitting in the service said to him out loud in the midst of that hall full of people, "You are pointing at me!" This preacher pointed his finger, had the habit often of pointing his finger; and this man yelled out in the congregation: "I know you are pointing at me!" And men and women in that area — senior men and women — they were brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. There were other instances of which we haven't time to tell you about.

(to be continued)

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Belgic Confession

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Introduction, cont.

In our previous articles we have dealt with the life of Guido de Bres, the author of the Belgic Confession. We have discussed the value of Creeds in general and of the Belgic Confession in particular. In this connection we answered some objections which are commonly lodged against the Creeds. In the present article, the last of the introduction to the exposition of the Belgic Confession, we wish to take note of two outstanding characteristics of this particular creed and give a brief outline of its contents.

Strikingly the Belgic Confession says virtually nothing explicitly concerning the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome. We say, strikingly, because this stands in sharp contrast with the creedal statements of the Protestants of the time which contained sharp polemic against Roman Catholicism. Our own Heidelberg Catechism, which treats the Reformed faith from an experiential point of view,

does not hesitate to condemn the "popish mass" as an "accursed idolatry". (cf. Lord's Day, XXX, question 80) The Gallican Confession, which had such a profound influence on the Belgic Confession, as we saw in our last installment, is decidedly anti-Rome. It would certainly appear, therefore, that de Bres deliberately chose not to write anything explicitly anti-Rome. Why? The answer is not that the Reformers were motivated by fear of reprisal on the part of the Romish political leaders of the time. The life and death of de Bres himself precludes this possibility.

There are three factors which contributed to this. First, we must understand that there were hundreds, perhaps thousands of tracts and pamphlets being written in those days which spoke of specific abuses and heresies perpetuated by Rome. There was no real need for de Bres to add to this in the Confession of Faith. It must be understood, in the second place,

that the Reformed Faith so beautifully expressed in the Belgic Confession was in itself a clear and strong and sustained protest against the doctrines and practices of Rome. And, thirdly, in this connection it ought to be remembered that there were thousands of saints of God who had little opportunity to become familiar with the doctrines of the Reformation. They were oppressed and kept in ignorance by the hierarchy of Rome. To win these for the faith was the prayer and aim of the Reformers. It may very well be that in the mind of de Bres and his contemporaries it was thought that a positive exposition of the truth of the Word of God would serve better to convince others than an all out attack on the papists.

In the light of this characteristic one would not expect the Belgic Confession to condemn so strongly the abuses of the Anabaptists. This is most assuredly the case. The errors of the Anabaptists are singled out time and again through the thirty seven articles of this creed. No less than three times the Anabaptists are mentioned by name.

To understand why this emphatic condemnation of Anabaptistic errors is present in the Belgic Confession we must know something of this movement. The term *Anabaptist* (which means, rebaptism, because of their insistence on baptizing again those who had received the sacrament in infancy), denotes a religious movement which began in Switzerland under the leadership of Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz. This movement soon spread to northern and western Europe, and it continued until after the death of Menno Simons (1496-1561), when the term *Anabaptist* was replaced by the name *Mennonite*. While the precise origins of this movement have been the subject of rather intense study and debate, its teachings are rather clearly known. From its beginning under Grebel and Manz Anabaptism held the view of a radical separation of church and state. Any cooperation or affiliation between the two was considered to be a denial of the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Church, according to the Anabaptists, was the company of visibly regenerate. For this reason baptism could only be administered to adults upon the confession of their faith and conversion. In the early years the movement was opposed to all violence. They insisted, for example, that military service was sinful, the payment of taxes to a government in war was a violation of the Word of God. Doctrinally the Anabaptists were afflicted with a good deal of subjectivism and mysticism. They looked for guidance through visions and dreams and religious experiences. They held open the possibility of new revelations in addition to the inscripturated Word of God. Apart from special illumination of the Holy Spirit, which alone enabled believers to understand the Scriptures, the Bible remained a dead

letter. The Reformers had little sympathy for the movement.

It stands to reason that this kind of subjectivism and mysticism would lead to all kinds of wild excesses in both doctrine and practice. There were, for example, the Anabaptistic Zwickau prophets who came to Wittenberg during the time Luther was being held in Wartburg and accused the Lutherans of a half-hearted reformation. These men predicted that within five to seven years the world would end, at which time all the wicked would be slain while all believers who had been rebaptized would be saved. Thomas Munzer was an adherent of these views and a famous Anabaptist leader in Germany. This man believed that a special inner voice was needed in order to understand God's Word. Whatever was learned from this inner voice had far more value than any teaching of the Church and her theologians. He conceived for his special assignment as being called to usher in the Kingdom of God after the example of the time of the Apostles. He argued passionately for equality of social status and community of goods. He also taught that if the Kingdom could not be brought peacefully then believers would be forced to fight with the sword. One of God's elect, Munzer believed, could strangle a thousand of the enemy; two could slay ten thousand. In the Peasants' War (1525) Thomas Munzer was killed in battle.

By far the most horrible story of Anabaptism is the dark story of Munster. The leaders here were two Dutchmen; John Matthyszoon of Haarlem and John Beukeszoon of Leiden. These men were inspired by the teachings of Melchior Hoffman, who foretold an imminent return of Christ. They encouraged their followers to accompany them to the city of Munster in Westphalia where they said Zion was going to appear in full glory upon earth. The leaders undermined the legal authority and power of the town council, with the result that soon the city was surrounded and besieged by the forces of surrounding cities. Matthyszoon was killed when in a mad frenzy he ran out of the town to attack the enemy. The power fell into the hands of John of Leiden and all restraint was thrown to the winds. Twelve elders were appointed by John to rule under him. All previous marriages were annulled, and polygamy was practiced. John, himself, had sixteen wives in addition to Divara who had been the wife of Matthyszoon. Meanwhile, other Anabaptists were urging that all monks and nuns be slain, and some even dared to advocate the abolition of all civil authorities and governments. It is no wonder that not only the Church of Rome but also all branches of Protestantism opposed these excesses of Anabaptists. The difficulty was that the civil authorities lumped the Anabaptists together with the Reformers and

their followers. Hence, de Bres and the leaders of the Reformed Faith were concerned to disassociate themselves from the Anabaptists. This accounts for the repeated and severe condemnation of the Anabaptists and their views which we find in the Belgic Confession.

The Confession of Faith was intended to be an apology for the Reformed Faith, a clear statement of its main tenets so that all might know the truth concerning the Reformed movement.

As to its contents the Belgic Confession is made up of some thirty-seven articles. Articles 1-7 are of an introductory nature. Article 1 expresses belief in God. Revelation is the subject of Article 2; while, in Articles 3-7 the creed speaks of the Reformed faith concerning the Scriptures. In Articles 8-11 the Doctrine of God is treated (Theology) and in Articles 12-15 the Doctrine of Man is developed (Anthropology). The Doctrine of Election is the subject of Article 16 and Article 17 treats of the Recovery of Fallen Man. The Confession speaks of the Doctrine of Christ (Christology) in Articles 18-22 and of the Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology) in

Articles 23 and 24, Article 25 treats the subject, The Abolishing of The Law, and Article 26 speaks of Christ's Intercession. The Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology) is covered in Articles 27-35. Article 36 speaks of the Magistrates, and the Doctrine of the Last Things (Eschatology) is the subject of Article 37. Thus the Belgic Confession, in distinction from the Heidelberg Catechism which speaks of the truth as it is the experience of the child of God, follows the well known division of dogmatics into six loci or points of doctrine. It is more objective in its approach. One must not, however, expect to find in this Confession a treatment of Reformed Dogmatics. Certainly, while the whole of the Reformed Truth of the Word of God is simply stated and summed, the Belgic Confession is no Dogmatics text.

It is, however, as we have emphasized before an eloquent statement of what we as Reformed Christians, Protestant Reformed Christians, all believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths. That we may grow in that belief and confession is our aim as we study this gem among the Reformational Creeds article by article in the light of the infallible Word of God.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Spiritual Growth -- The Means (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

"How can I grow spiritually?"

This question is asked frequently, not out of intellectual curiosity, but out of an urgent desire to be able to face life's problems and to go on living. A parent may have died, the world of a young person seems to cave in. There are sobs of grief, deeply rooted fears, some bitterness. Such a child or young person is searching for help; how can they face life, where can they find strength? A person faces serious surgery; that is no pleasant prospect, yet it is necessary; and such a one is grasping for assurance and strength. Sometimes young people have deep emotional crises over broken love; at such a time one is trying to overcome anger with courage to face life and a healing of deep wounds. Almost always we face the tempting voice of satan and bad company beckoning us to come along for a good time, and that spells trouble.

Where do we go for strength to face this everyday stress of life as well as the crises? Let's face it, we need an extra source of energy at such a time.

SEEK YE THE LORD

A time of spiritual crisis demands of us careful self examination. Naturally, the solution to the problem that we face must come from somewhere. The most important question we face is: what kind of solution are we looking for? Do we simply want to get rid of the problem, or do we want to learn something through the experience? Is the answer simply in getting our way, or is it that we begin to realize that God has a useful purpose in every trial and that we will be better in serving Him because of the crisis He has sent? If we will be selfish, our solution can only be found in getting rid of our problem as fast as possible, so that we don't have to be inconvenienced by it. If we will be spiritually sensitive, we will conclude that God has something to say to us through this experience and that we must have the heart to understand and benefit by it.

It is this strength that must come to us from God. This energy is divine, it has its fountain in God Himself. This the Bible stresses over and over. "None

can keep alive His own soul," Ps. 22:29. Instead all blessings come from Jehovah, "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary," Psalm 68:9. Listen to the beautiful confession of Isaiah, "Lord thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us," Isa. 26:12. Jesus expresses it this way, "I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing," John 15:5. Without me ye can do nothing! There is the clue for strength. Positively, with God all things are possible, Matt. 19:26.

Let this speak to you, young people. You have times of spiritual stress, that's a fact. Where do you go for help? It may be ever so interesting to read Ann Landers or Dear Abby; some of their advice may be so practical and full of common sense; yet what is lacking is the Word of God. Guidance without God is not reliable; at best it is the wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God, I Cor. 1. Similarly, you can read books on marriage counseling, you can try the Norman Vincent Peale approach of "Positive thinking", you can implement the latest "How to do it books" on character building and such like. Remember this one thing, you are a Christian; you are not just a human being, as Humanism would have you imagine. You need a Christian solution, and there is no guidance for a Christian without God Himself giving it.

Hence, we go back to that basic injunction, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near," Isa. 55:6. And how do you do that? Not by trying to cast upon yourself or others some mystical trance, not by transcendental meditation, not by some emotional experience that will let all your pent up energies break forth irrationally. Rather, it comes by contemplating carefully the Word of God. God's will and guidance toward a solution of life's trials is found within the covers of His Holy Word. It is the light upon our pathway, Psalm 119:105.

JEHOVAH'S HELP

So far we have concluded that we do have a Book, a reference work, which contains God's counsel for us in the time of need. This is important, for God's message of hope is not confined in the minds of certain people, not hidden away in a technical "journal," but in our homes, in our own bedrooms, in our churches and schools. It is the clear and objective testimony of the Word of God.

There is another question that we face. How can we be brought to seek and understand this counsel of God's Word? You know as well as I do that the Bible is the best seller of our day. You can find it in every

hotel room, motel, doctor's office, and I suppose almost every home. And yet there is no Book that goes unread and unheeded more than the Bible. Look at yourself; you are sad, you are hurt because of something that happened during the day, you feel bitterness. Do you really turn to that Bible and find the light of day? Is it really read and reread by you? Are the pages of your Bible grimy through use? Do you underscore passages that mean a great deal to you, so that you can return to them over and over?

It takes something divine to make the Bible the source of comfort and strength that God has intended for His people.

And what is that? Grace!

Grace is the energy that flows from God Himself which makes the ugly beautiful, the contemptible sinner fall on his knees to seek forgiveness, the captive sinner unshackled from the tyranny of the devil. It brings joy to the sorrowful, hope to those in despair, peace to the troubled, understanding to the simple, conviction to the unsure. Grace makes all the difference. It is God's energy for a truly Christian life.

And how is grace brought down to us? By none other than God Himself, Who sends His grace to us through the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who brought to reality the creative Word of God in the beginning, Gen. 1:3. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ now opens the eyes of the blind, gives understanding to the lowly, and saves the children of God through the power of grace, Eph. 2:8. For this reason He is called The Comforter or literally, The Helper, John 15:26.

MEANS OF GRACE

Let's pursue this line of thinking a little more. We need the Bible as God's directive. We need the Holy Spirit Who brings grace to us that enables us to seek and believe this Word of God. Now we may well ask: in what way does the Holy Spirit work this grace in us? The answer is that He does this by the preaching of the Word and the sacraments.

We must avoid two extremes. The first is that we imagine that going to church guarantees for us the reception of grace. There is no magical communication of grace in church. This is particularly important for you young people. I'm afraid some of you think that your soul's health is guaranteed simply by going to church. To some of you it makes no difference how you worship: you may be entertained, you may sleep, you may daydream, but after all, you went to church! This is wrong, grace is conveyed through *worship*, not by your bodily presence in God's house alone. The second extreme to be avoided is that going to church isn't all that important. Sometimes young people react

to church going simply because they cannot appreciate WORSHIP! Most young people are turned on by the ear shattering noises of rock. There is none of this in our churches. They are entertained by the silly humor of television; thankfully there is none of this in our worship services. The Psalter by contrast seems so "dead." The preacher is so long-winded that you can't concentrate that long anyway; why try? The congregational prayer is a time to catch up on neglected sleep. If so, why go at all? Why not be honest and stay home? So just turn off and tune out! Such a solution is radical and a young person must realize that by doing this, he is separating himself from God's energy of salvation. Quitting church is not simply solving a boring problem, it is an act of separation — separation from God.

We are exhorted to "grow in *grace*, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," II Peter 3:18. Interesting, that one of the first words we hear on Sunday morning is, "Grace, mercy, and peace be granted unto you from God our Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by the operation of the Holy Spirit," II Peter 1:2. There is a reason for this: the preaching of the Word and the sacraments are God's appointed means of grace. Through prayer we approach God's throne of grace, Heb. 4:16. We sing the psalms. The entire worship service centers around God's Word. As the Holy Spirit works in us through the Word, we grow in understanding, we learn God's will, we are exhorted to godly living and how we must express this, we are encouraged, warned, built up. By the preaching of the Word and sacraments the Word of God dwells in us, so that we hear it and by God's grace do it, James 1:19-22. Now then, you see the need for spiritual growth in your life? What is your attitude toward worship? What do you do to prepare? Are you diligent in your worship? This is the most important!

THE ABIDING WORD

By the Holy Spirit's applying the Word and sacrament, we are able to take that Word of God and be guided by it. The Holy Spirit is not confined to the four walls of church, neither is grace confined to

those sacred moments of worship. The Holy Spirit and grace accompany us as we return to our homes and work. This is the proper relationship between worship and life. If we do not worship God and if we neglect the means of grace, we cannot imagine that the Holy Spirit is with us and that grace is given to us. The Spirit does not work *apart* from the Word preached. He works through that Word, and by that Word abides with us and fills our whole life and heart.

Hence, we must continually busy ourselves with that Bible, pray daily for the Holy Spirit to abide with us, that God will give us grace to deal with all life's problems.

The Bereans understood this, "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so," Acts 17:1. The preaching of the Word gives the guide lines for our faith and life. It is our duty to read that Bible and prayerfully apply it to our daily lives. Hence, Bible reading and personal prayer is an integral part of our spiritual growth. I'm sure that your personal experience is much like mine: when I am closest to God in my prayer life and daily devotions, then I am more able to deal with the trials of life. This is not a coincidence, it indicates we are making use of God's energy which He gives to those who prayerfully ask them of Him.

Before going to bed, do you fill your soul with trashy reading, senseless television programs, or do you take time to be holy and wrestle in prayer with your God as you open His Word. What a difference this makes. You love music? Fill your soul with the great choral music that edifies instead of tearing down your soul. Talk with your parents and share with them your frustrations instead of letting them bottle-up and weigh you down. Pray sincerely, not using a little memorized prayer that may have sufficed in your childhood; pray fervently and specifically for your particular needs for that day or night.

Grace is God's gift to lift us up.

Do you experience this?

Grow in grace.

Do you receive the STANDARD BEARER regularly?

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

“Hyper-Calvinism” and the Call of the Gospel (6)

Rev. David Engelsma

The previous article began to show that the rejection of the offer of the gospel is motivated, not by hyper-Calvinism, but by Calvinism. It was argued that the offer, since it universalizes the grace of God in Jesus Christ, is inherently a denial of the sovereignty of grace.

The only alternative to the truth of sovereign grace is the teaching that salvation depends upon the free will of the sinner. This is another aspect of the theory of the offer that a Reformed man objects to. We appreciate the fact that in the past defenders of the offer within the Reformed sphere have vehemently repudiated free will, despite the inconsistency of their repudiation with the doctrine of the offer itself. Nevertheless, the teaching of free will is necessarily implied in the doctrine of the offer and can only be repudiated by repudiating the offer itself. First, the idea of the concept “offer” in the context of a universal love of God and a desire of God to save everyone, is that salvation depends upon the sinner’s acceptance or rejection of the offer. In the past, the word “offer” from the Latin word *offero* was used by Reformed men to describe God’s activity in the preaching of the gospel, because the word has originally the meaning “bring to (someone), present (something or someone to somebody).” All Reformed men hold that Christ is presented in the preaching to everyone who hears the preaching. In this sense, He is “offered” in the gospel. Calvin used “offer” in this sense, and so does the Canons of Dordt: “It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ, offered therein . . . that those who are called by the ministry of the word refuse to come. . .” (III, IV, 9). But this is not the meaning of the word when it is used in connection with a universal love of God and a desire to save everybody.¹ Secondly, the truth of sovereign grace has only one alternative: salvation dependent on man’s willing or running. Since the doctrine of the offer denies the sovereignty of grace, it necessarily affirms that salvation is dependent on or conditioned by man’s acceptance of the offer by his own free will. Faith is then generally viewed as man’s all-important acceptance of the offer by his own free will.

In spite of the insistence of those in the Reformed sphere who defend the offer that they reject the doctrine of free will, concerning the sincerity of

which we have no doubt in many cases, the doctrine of the well-meant offer contains the germ of that heresy and will, I predict, result in open ecclesiastical confession of free will where the offer reigns, just as it has already resulted in official ecclesiastical approval of universal atonement.

Certain steps are already being taken in the direction of a formal confession of free will by Reformed Churches. One of these is the widespread representation of faith as a condition to salvation by Reformed theologians. Invariably, a defense of the offer of the gospel will stress that salvation is conditional and that the condition is man’s faith. This is true of A. C. De Jong’s defense of the well-meant offer against Hoeksema in his *The Well-Meant Gospel Offer*. In criticizing Hoeksema’s denial of the offer, De Jong felt it necessary first of all to attack Hoeksema’s contention that the covenant, the promise, and salvation are unconditional (pp. 72ff.). His own defense of the offer took the form of emphasizing that salvation is conditional: “For implicit in the concept of offer is the idea of conditionality” (p. 100); “Hoeksema argues as if God does not will that his conditional offer be accepted” (p. 123). The condition, of course, is faith. De Jong is representative of all those who defend the offer.²

De Jong is correct when he states that the idea of conditionality is implicit in the concept of the offer. That God loves all and desires to save all, while not all are actually saved, implies that salvation depends upon man’s fulfilling the condition of faith. That God saves by *offering* Christ and salvation to men implies that salvation depends upon the condition of accepting, that is, faith. But the Biblical and Reformed doctrine is that salvation is unconditional. If the glorious truth, “by grace ye are saved,” does not mean this, it means nothing. The Reformed

¹Others have noted, with regard to Calvin’s use of “offer,” that *offero* meant “to present, to exhibit or set forth” (cf. *Calvin’s Calvinism*, Eerdmans, 1956, p. 31, footnote). Although our quarrel with the offer is not a quibbling over words, the word “offer” should be dropped from the Reformed vocabulary. Not a Biblical term, it is today so loaded with Arminian connotations that it is no longer serviceable. Instead of an offer of the gospel, we should speak of the call of the gospel — as Scripture does.

²For a defense of the offer by means, necessarily, for a defense of a conditional covenant and conditional salvation from a different quarter, cf. the Englishman, Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity* (London: The Olive Tree, 1967), pp. 59, 60.

doctrine of “unconditional election” explicitly describes salvation as “unconditional.” Election is the source and foundation of all salvation; if it is unconditional, so also are the atonement, regeneration, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. It is the creedal Reformed position — not the private speculations of Herman Hoeksema — that salvation is unconditional — not conditional, not conditional and unconditional, but unconditional. The Canons of Dordt reject any and every form of conditional salvation, especially the form that makes faith a condition, in the rejection of errors under Head I:

“... the Synod rejects the errors of those ... who teach ... that he (God) chose out of all possible conditions ... the act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving ... as a condition of salvation...”

“... the Synod rejects the errors of those ... who teach ... that ... faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions...”

A condition of salvation is an act that man must and can perform of himself and that salvation depends on. A conditional salvation is, in principle, a salvation dependent upon the free will of man. If the idea of conditionality is implied in the concept of the offer, there is nothing to be done with the concept of the offer than to cast it out of the Reformed tent like an Ishmael. But the Reformed churches today are permeated with the notion that man’s faith is the condition unto salvation. Thus, they are already on the way to a formal confession of free will.

Another step in that direction is taken when Reformed theologians, in the midst of their defense of a well-meant offer, answer the question, “Why, if God loves and desires to save all men, are not all men saved?” by appealing to a “mystery.” This was the answer of Harold Dekker, professor of missions in Calvin Seminary, in the course of his argument for universal atonement on the basis of the doctrine of the well-meant offer of the gospel. Having said that God loves all men with a redemptive love and that Christ died for all men, he asked, “If God loves all men with a redemptive love, how is it that not all men are saved?”³

In fairness to Dekker, he did not take the last step into full-fledged Arminianism by adopting free will. This leaves him in a curious position. On the one hand, he embraces the Arminian doctrine of universal election (“God loves all men with a redemptive love”) and the Arminian doctrine of resistible grace (God’s grace, which Dekker correctly insists is one — the saving grace in Christ — fails to save many towards whom it is directed). On the other hand, he stops short of maintaining the Arminian doctrine of free

will, which is the teaching that all of the others hinge on. One likes to say to Dekker: “Look here, your entire theology demands the doctrine of free will. If you maintain your theology of universal redemptive love, universal atonement, and universal grace in the preaching, take the last step too, so that everybody knows what is what. But if you seriously hesitate to affirm free will, the only alternative is God’s sovereign salvation of some particular sinners: He freely and sovereignly saves some in distinction from others for no other reason than His own good pleasure. But this is the utter destruction of your doctrines of universal election and universal atonement. If you maintain salvation by sovereign grace, in distinction from free will, what have you gained by your doctrines of universal election and universal atonement? You can now preach to all men that God loves them with a redemptive love and that Christ died for them to save them from their sins, but at the same time you must whisper to yourself, ‘But He will only actually save some of you, and He will not save others of you, according to His own sovereign will.’ What you whisper to yourself makes the message of universal love, universal atonement, and a universal desire to save, which you proclaim loudly, a fraud.”

Even though Dekker did not give free will as the answer to the question, “How is it that not all men are saved?,” the answer that he did give was a step in the wrong direction. Dekker’s answer was: “Let us ... (leave) the unexplainable where it belongs — in the infinite mystery of the heart of Him who is Himself love. On the side of divine sovereignty, then, there is mystery. On the side of human responsibility, however, there is no mystery at all. The answer is plainly a matter of unbelief.” It is true that, as concerns man’s responsibility, the reason why many perish is their own unbelief. The fault is man’s own. But it is not true, as regards God’s sovereignty, that one can only refer to the mystery. The Scriptures teach that the reason why not all men are saved is that God has eternally reprobated some men, eternally decreeing that they perish in their sins, and that God, according to His decree, does not bestow faith upon them, but hardens them in sin. In Romans 9, in explanation of the fact that some in Israel were saved and others were not (vss. 6-8), Paul plainly teaches that God loved and chose some, but hated and reprobated others (vss. 11-13). According to this double predestination, God has mercy on some, but hardens the others (vs. 18). The reason why there are “vessels of mercy ... afore prepared unto glory” (vs. 23) is that the Potter has “power over the clay ... to make one vessel unto honour” (vs. 21). The reason why there are “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction”

³“God’s Love for Sinners — One or Two?,” *The Reformed Journal*, March, 1963, p. 15.

(vs. 22) is that the Potter has power also "to make . . . another (vessel) unto dishonour" (vs. 21).

In the Old Dispensation, salvation was enjoyed by one nation, while all the other nations perished. The explanation is not shrouded in "mystery." Rather, the explanation is the sovereign, discriminating actions of Jehovah: "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation . . ." (Psalm 147:19, 20).

Christ did not hesitate to reveal to the unbelieving Jews that "ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep . . ." (John 10:26). On the other hand, the reason why other men do believe and have eternal life is that they are Jesus' sheep, given to Him of the Father in divine election (vss. 27-29).

The Canons of Dordt explain why some men are saved and others are not: some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it. And "that some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree" (I, 6).

Why God has chosen to save some, in distinction from others, is indeed a mystery, the mystery of the

free and sovereign grace of God, which we who are saved can only adore. But there is an answer to the question, "Why are some saved, while others are not saved?" That answer is the sovereignty of God in predestination. Such an answer is the death-blow to free will. To refuse to give this answer, but instead to speak of a "mystery" is to open up the way to a future solving of the "mystery" in terms of the free will of man. Not only is this answer the death-blow to free will, but it is also the death-blow to universal love, universal atonement, and a universal desire to save, that is, to the offer of the gospel.

In the meantime, before there is official adoption of free will, free will is widely preached and taught in Reformed churches. When ministers *practise* the offer of the gospel, proclaiming to their hearers that God loves them all, desires the salvation of everybody, and now offers them salvation, they are telling the people that salvation depends upon man's decision for Christ, and this is the message that comes through to the people loudly and clearly, even though there is no official decision of the church approving free will and even though the preacher does not explicitly say, as many today do, "Now it is up to you."

(to be continued)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews 11:35-38

(CONTINUED)

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE CRUEL TREATMENT OF "OTHERS" (Hebrews 11:36-38)

2. Here we come to a great catalogue of cruel treatment of the saints. We need not go into too great detail in explaining this cruelty; yet we ought to tarry a bit and reflect upon the enormous suffering which only faith in God could endure. Here is a faith which believes that God is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

We read that "others" endured cruel mockings and scourgings. This was pure trial, a horrible experience in soul and body, in marrow and in bones. The mockings were inflicted on their soul; they were sharp, direct strokes on soul and on body. We read in II Maccabees 7:1: "And it came to pass that seven brethren also with their mother were at the king's command taken and shamefully handled with scourges and cords, to compel them to taste of the

abominable swine's flesh". And, again, we read in the same chapter: "And when the first had died after this manner, they brought the second to the mocking; and they pulled off the skin of his head with the hair and asked him, wilt thou eat before thy body be punished in every limb?"

Then there was the more slow and lasting suffering of "bonds and imprisonment." Was not Micaiah put in prison because he spoke the word of God to Ahab in the presence of king Jehoshaphat concerning the outcome of the battle with the king of Syria at Ramoth in Gilead? We read that Ahab says, "Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace." Or, to cite another instance, think of what the Jews did to Jeremiah because he prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed by the king of Babylon. We read, "Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had

made that the prison," Jer. 37:15. So sore was the affliction of Jeremiah that he, like Job, cursed the day of his birth. Says he, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man whom brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide; because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and the womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?" Such was the outcry of the prophet in his cruel treatment of mockings and scourgings and imprisonment.

Also the text speaks of sufferings to death and short of death. And the intent of this was to "tempt to sin." We see this utterance of sinful outcries in the case of Jeremiah. That was the case when the saints are stoned. Who does not think of Zachariah the son of Jehoiada, the aged and godly high-priest, who was stoned by those who conspired against him? We read "an stoned him at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD," (II Chronicles 24:21), Matt. 23:27. And we also think of Stephen, who testified to the Sanhedrin concerning the Christ, and the meaning of Old Testament History, that he was stoned to death for the sake of Christ, (Acts 7:57, 58). Yes, we think of the prophet Isaiah, who tradition has it, was "sawn asunder." And also men and women were slain with the sword. Jezebel attempted to do this to Elijah. Saul tried to kill David with the sword. So great was the fury of the Jews that they went and fetched Urijah, a prophet who faithfully declared the word of the LORD out of Egypt, whither he had fled, "and brought him to Jehoiakim the king, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people," (Jeremiah 26:23).

The final touch is given, which shows that the measure of the iniquity of the persecutors in this "world" is being filled up; in the text we read in doleful tones: "they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins." They had little to clothe them but the bare necessities of life. They had to forego all adornments of society. They were veritable outcasts of society, the offscouring of the world. They never rated in any of the high places of the world, and if they did they were persecuted and cast to the lions. These "skins" were the symbol of their being rejected of the world. Their life was that of the destitute; they always were pushed back. They were afflicted and evilly entreated. Theirs was a life of one long perpetual want, misery and discomfort. Heirs of the

world were these meek ones; yet they had nothing. Always they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods in the hope of a better inheritance. Having their feet in the midst of the misery of this earth, they had their heads in faith above the storm and the clouds.

THE BACKWARD GLANCE CONCERNING "THESE ALL." (Hebrews 11:39, 40)

The question might be raised: why this long road of suffering through the centuries? What is the meaning of this "history" of the church in her afflictions? Is there Divine wisdom and intent in this all?

The fact that is outstanding is that from Abel till the last saint which has suffered, there is not one who received "the promise." This promise here evidently refers to the final consummation of the work of God in the day of Christ at the end of the ages. That will be the time when we receive our resurrection bodies, and shall have immortality and life.

Why does the writer emphasize this here? Was it not self-evident that none of "these all" had received the promise, and that they all had gone to the grave, to Sheol? It seems to us that this element is pointed out for the very purpose that it shows up, on the one hand, the great patience of the saints throughout the ages, and, on the other hand, the great need of the patience which the Hebrew Christians needed to remain steadfast and not to fall back by unbelief into perdition. They must walk the same difficult road as all the saints did and look beyond the horizons of the present to the time when God shall fully give us to receive the promise of complete victory over all the hosts of hell, whether these be in the church as Sodom and Egypt, or whether these be the world outside of the church, the nations who have been left to walk in their own ways.

Yes, these all received testimony by faith. It is only "faith" which is the secret of their life of suffering, hope, obedience, action in the midst of the conflict. And each generation and each individual "received testimony" that they were righteous and of the party of the living God in the world, and that the world was not worthy of them. They received this testimony before God and men, angels and devils. Of this there is no doubt. Faith was the victory that overcame the world!

But we must not lose faith and confidence. In the days of Peter mockers said, "where is the promise of his coming?" (II Peter 3:4). And these spoke of the Lord being slack (tardy) concerning his promise. They wilfully distorted the voice of history concerning the great judgment of God in the flood in the days of Noah. They contended that there never had been any indication on the part of the Lord that

He would come to judge the world in righteousness, and to make all things new, and to realize the promise, and to establish His eternal tabernacle with man. And they did their utmost to make the hearts of the believers weary and impatient with the Lord's seemingly tardy foot-steps in history.

However, the key to the entire problem is that the Lord would save the *entire* church. Not one of the elect, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, may be lost, but they must all be brought to repentance and to the knowledge of the truth. That is the teaching of II Peter. In Hebrews 11:40 the reason is as follows, "*God having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*"

The term "better" (*kreitton*) is very common and also very significant in the epistle to the Hebrews. It refers first of all to Christ Himself in His exaltation above the angels at the right hand of God. Christ is in the "better" estate, the higher and more powerful position than the angels, who are but ministering spirits sent out for the benefit of those who will inherit eternal life. Melchizedek is great and better than Abraham when he goes to meet him when the former returns from the slaughter of the kings, (Hebrews 1:4; 7:38). Christ brings in a better hope than did the law (Hebrews 7:19), and Jesus is made the surety of a better covenant, (Hebrews 7:22). And the Hebrews are encouraged with the assurance that they have "in heaven a better and an enduring substance," (Hebrews 10:34), and the saints who refused a proffered deliverance did so in the hope of obtaining a better resurrection, (Hebrews 11:34). In all of these passages the adjective is in the comparative degree. However, there is something grand and superlative about the term. It refers not merely to something which is relatively better, but which is better because of its very nature; it is on a far higher and grander scale. It is incomparably better, because it is the expression of the love, grace

and the wisdom of God. It reflects the unsearchable riches of the love and wisdom of God's elective purpose in Christ Jesus!

That "better thing" is better for us, or really "concerning" us. We are the great subject of the Divine concern in this matter. God will save the believers as a body, as *a church!* And every member must be saved and that *together* in the day of Christ. The saints of the Old Testament may not prevent the saints of the New Testament, and the saints in the New Testament which have fallen asleep in Jesus will not inherit the final promise before those who are still living on earth when Christ appears upon the clouds with the sound of the Archangel and with the trump of God, (I Thes. 4:14-18). History must be completed; that which remains of the suffering of Christ must be filled up by the saints, (Col. 1:24).

God "foresaw" this concerning the church. He made a "provision." Such was his wisdom in His eternal decree in the counsel of peace. And now He executes this decree in his Fatherly providence over His people. And His decree concerning "all these" of whom the writer spoke in Hebrews 11 is that these shall not be saved "without us."

God will "perfect" the saints. That will be the highest and most glorious manifestation of Christ, the Son, who is the expressed image of His being, the effulgence of His glory. When that is manifested, then the Son is perfected. This is the perfection which is His through suffering. He will bring many sons to glory, (Hebrews 2:10). As the Captain of our salvation He shall be perfected, that is, He shall be manifested as the Son of God in our human nature, crowned with glory and honor. And this glory can only be perfected in the saints after their long history of suffering; God has united cross and crown for His Son Jesus, but He has also united this cross and crown for us, the saints, who will be "perfected" with Him.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Abram, The Peacemaker

Rev. John A. Heys

On the pages of Holy Writ there are presented to us some giants of faith. Hebrews 11 gives us a whole list of them and their deeds which they wrought by faith. But Scripture also shows us some of the children of God who were extremely weak in their faith, frail

believers whose works were destroyed while they themselves are saved as by fire.

Lot was one of them. That he is to be classified with believers, and with the children of God, is evident from Scripture's testimony that he vexed his

righteous soul in Sodom. The sin of Sodom bothered him greatly. But it grieved him most of all to see the way his family was going, and how his daughters were seeking their husbands among the wicked sons of the world. However, he was a born again, believing child of God; and God never takes away the seed of that new life which He gives in the moment of the rebirth. He does give grace to cause all these to persevere even to the end, though they may fall, and fall far. What is that statement in the book of Psalms, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand"?

Although Chapter 12 does not mention Lot, we may be sure from Chapter 13:1 that Lot went with Abram and Sarai into Egypt at the time of the famine. However, as a weak believer he put up no argument to Abram, and he made no attempt to turn Abram aside from this sinful way and walk that showed lack of trust in God. He spoke no word of rebuke, made no attempt to correct. He, too, was going to live by bread alone; and it all looked good to Lot. Anything that would give him material advantage he was not ready to let go. If Abram went for bread, Lot would go along for bread. If Abram feared for his life, Lot feared for his life as fully, and perhaps more so.

Being a younger man — and he was not a young lad — was no reason for him to remain silent when Abram showed his intentions of going to Egypt for bread. The elders in the church are usually exactly that, the older men in the congregation with years of experience. But it often pleased God to use the younger to rebuke the older when they walked in ways of sin. It was the lad, Samuel, whom God used to bring tidings to aged Eli because of the sins of his sons which he did not seek to prevent and to punish. And did not Paul write to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth"? No, it would not have been out of place for the younger man to rebuke and correct the older man, when he sets out, or makes known his plans to set out, on an evil way. That, after all, is a work of love. And it is not love to leave one in one's sins and make no attempt to turn that one from an evil way.

Along with Abram went Lot, following Abram's bad example, and glad that he, too, could get some bread in Egypt. And he got more than bread. Both he and Abram came home rich in cattle and servants. Abram, we read, was *very* rich in cattle and silver and gold. With the latter he could buy servants to take care of his herds which were too large for him to handle alone. And of Lot we read in verse 5 that he had flocks and herds and tents. Verse 7 also indicates that Lot had herdsmen, while verse 6 teaches us that the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that

they could not dwell together. They had large flocks and herds and no land. The Canaanites and Perizzites dwelt in the land before they came there, and they had taken the good ground and the wells. And now when Abram comes out of Egypt with large herds and flocks, and Lot comes with a goodly number of these, the matter gets critical. God, watching over His covenant people, does not allow the Canaanites and the Perizzites to attack His children. Strife does not originate from that direction. God is faithful to His covenant promise; and, having brought Abram here with the promise of giving the land to him and of making of him a great nation, He gives him perfect protection from the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

But within the sphere of the church strife becomes a very real threat. Abram's servants and Lot's strive for land and for water. How that crafty old adversary of the church, Satan, delights to foment strife within the church! How he enjoys setting the brother against the brother and making enemies within the sphere of the covenant! If he cannot set the world against the church, he will strive to turn the church itself into a battleground. Always we ought to be on our guard against him and live in the consciousness of his many attacks within the church by the members of that church. We have so many examples of it recorded for us in Holy Writ that we cannot say that God has not forewarned us as to this wicked device of Satan. And when he stirs us up to attack the fellow believer for some material advantage, or for our own cause, we ought to tell him to get behind us and to resist his every attempt.

Abram does not only do that, but he puts forth positive efforts to make peace where a state of war existed. We are to emulate Abram, and not Lot. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God."

Now it is inconceivable that Lot knew nothing of the strife between his herdsmen and between Abram's. Abram knew, and we may be sure that Lot's herdsmen told him of their struggle for land and water with the herdsmen of Abram. Lot's choice of the best land indicates his selfish, self-seeking nature. He may have given his servants orders to get out early and obtain the best of the land in the region. We may be sure that he was aware of the strife and approved of the struggle of his herdsmen for the best. He did not relish an open conflict with Abram. He was not trying to pick a fight with him. But he was ready to let his herdsmen fight to get every advantage over Abram that he could without putting forth his own hand to hurt him. He is not the peacemaker, but one who, while avoiding a confrontation personally with Abram, seeks to get an advantage over him.

Even in this respect and apart from his choice of the best land, when Abram as the peacemaker

suggests this to him, Lot showed himself to be an ingrate. When his father died, Abram took him under his roof and provided for him as though he were his child. When Abram went to the land of promise, he took Lot along, who then already must have been old enough to stand on his own two feet and support himself. Abram was seventy-five when he arrived in Canaan. Lot could have been in his mid-thirties or early forties. Yet Abram looked after him as a son, and took him along as part of his family. Did Lot appreciate it all? Did he have a warm spot in his heart for Abram? You would not think so to read the account here in Genesis 13. The strife between his herdsmen and Abram's he made no attempt to halt in deference to the man who had befriended him all these years. In peace he was not interested. In fat flocks and herds, in gold and silver, in personal advancement and advantage were his interests.

Abram is the peacemaker. And then we ought to place the emphasis upon the last part of the word. It is one thing to be a lover of peace, or even to be a seeker of peace. It is another thing to be a *maker* of peace. The peacemaker takes the initiative. He does not say, "Let him come to me, and I will receive him." He certainly does not say what many have said in the heat of strife and disagreement, "Only over my dead body!" Abram could have driven Lot away. He could have told him that this was enough, and if he did not instruct his servants to quit their fighting for the land which God had promised him, he would take measures to teach him that this was land promised to him by God. No, Abram wanted no fight between himself and Lot. He did not want the fighting between the two groups of herdsmen. He wanted peace, and he did something about it. THAT is what a peacemaker does.

Abram was ready to sacrifice, to give up what was rightfully his to maintain and keep peace between himself and Lot. Vindication such a peacemaker will leave to God. A reward he does not seek. He is interested in knowing the approval of his God. He is interested in walking in a way of love to God by dealing with his neighbor in love.

And all this he did in the full confidence of his faith that God would fulfill His promises and give him all that which had been promised. We see here a different Abram from the one who in the weakness of faith went down to Egypt to seek assurance that he would live to inherit the promises. The restoring grace of God is so evident, and Abram had learned from his

experiences because the Spirit applied the truth to his heart.

Now as the peacemaker he has the confidence of seeing God and of dwelling with Him in the glory of His kingdom. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall see God." All that Lot got to see and could see in his frame of mind is those green fields near Sodom and Gomorrah. All he saw was the material wealth of this world. And that is all we see when we walk in strife with the neighbour. James drives the truth home when he writes, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" James could have been talking to Lot, for his words do apply to him. He lusted, or otherwise he would have put a stop to the fighting of his herdsmen. He would have told them that the land was Abram's, spoken glowingly of all Abram had done for him, and would have gone to Abram and told him that he would move away since the land was promised to him. He would have thanked Abram and sought peace with him. No, Lot lusted, and he followed his lust to the plains of Sodom.

He did not see God in the sense that he had the assurance of God's approval and favour. He saw sin and sinners, and he came more and more in contact with those who hate God. He found himself getting deeper and deeper involved with them. The peacemakers shall see God, not those who fight because of the lust of their flesh.

And they shall see God because He is THE Peacemaker Who took the initiative, sought out the rebel, sent His Son and sacrificed Him so that there might be peace with God, and that we might by the Spirit of Christ, and on the basis of His shed blood, be reconciled to God to fight Him no more. And all His children by the power of that grace of reconciliation will be peacemakers. They will seek out the brother and go to him. They will not wait for him to come to them. They will give up what is rightfully theirs for the sake of God, and leave the whole matter of vindication to Him Who declared, "I will recompense saith the Lord." God's children will be imitators of God. And whereas He made peace by the blood of the cross, they will make peace by denying their flesh and for God's sake live in peace and self-denial before the brother in Christ.

Whom do you emulate? Lot or Abram?

Emulate Abram, and you are an imitator of God.

Know the standard and follow it. Read THE STANDARD BEARER.

ALL AROUND US

Prof. H. Hanko

Busing Of Private School Students

In some twenty-seven states, busing is provided by the state for private school students as well as for public school students. Apparently this too will soon cease. According to *Christianity Today*, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that states have no constitutional duty to provide free bus transportation for students of private schools. The case originated in Missouri when a family sought such busing for their children. A lower federal court refused, and the Supreme Court upheld the ruling of the lower court.

The decision does not forbid states to provide such busing. It merely states that the states have no duty to provide it. The decision is therefore, left up to each individual state.

According to the same magazine, the Supreme Court also voided a California tax-credit plan which was formed to help parents of private school children pay tuition costs.

We are not unhappy with these decisions. While we recognize the unfairness of requiring the parents of private school children to pay for the education of their own children in addition to the children attending public schools, we want no government aid to private schools. Government aid, as we have said before in these columns, will ultimately lead to government control. And we cherish too deeply our covenantal schools to do anything which will open the door the slightest bit to government control.

It is interesting though that this seems to be the trend in our country. We know from the Scriptures that the devil is the implacable foe of the cause of Christ, and that he will do all in his power to destroy that cause. We may be sure that the devil and his allies, the world of wicked men, hate Christian

schools and will not rest until these schools are destroyed. Right now, this is apparently the tack our enemies are taking: deprive Christian schools of all aid of any kind in the hopes that they will collapse because of inability to support them. This tack is working well in some areas. There are many parochial and private schools which are losing students because those who have previously supported them, no longer want to bear the burden of their support. The students of these schools are gradually drifting into the public school system. Even where unbelievers are starting private schools because they are thoroughly disgusted with conditions in the existing public schools, (and there are many places where this is happening), one wonders how long people will be willing to pay the high costs, especially in times of economic decline.

The one sure guarantee of continuing private schools is deep, spiritual conviction. Those parents who solemnly believe that Christian schools are necessary for the fulfillment of their covenant obligations will be willing to support these schools no matter what the cost. They will never abdicate their responsibility to train their children in the fear of the Lord, and turn over this responsibility to the godless state. No matter what the economic pressures, they will continue to maintain their schools.

What then will happen? We know that, in the long run, the state will never tolerate this. Something will have to be done. If economic pressure alone will not close those schools whose parents are committed to covenantal education, then some other means will have to be devised. What form this will take, only God knows. But we must rededicate ourselves to the cause of Christian education.

Government-Reared Children?

We were talking about the threats which believing parents face to the education of their children. These threats are more real than we often imagine.

Just today a sample copy of the magazine *Faith* came to my home. This magazine contained an article entitled: "Coming Soon: Government-Reared

Children". It was written by James Wesley Baker, a newswriter at radio station WMUU in Greenville, South Carolina. In this article the author points out the fact that social activists who advocate government training of children have already made considerable progress.

There are a number of men who are convinced that, if the training of children is left to parents, the world will never succeed in solving her many social problems. Several authorities are quoted. Dr. Reginald Lourie, president of the Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children, is quoted as saying: "There is a serious thinking among some of the future-oriented child development research people that maybe we can't trust the family alone to prepare young children for this kind of world which is emerging." This statement was made to a congressional sub-committee. He is quoted further as saying: "There is increasing evidence that we must intervene in the earliest years if we are to truly deal with the roots of many of the problems facing this country Child development offers an opportunity to have access to children in need of help to avoid distorted development in these early years." Dr. Milton Akers, Executive Director of the National Association for Education of Young Children, looks on such programs as necessary in our world: "It may well be that means by which wars, social conflict, and human injustice are eliminated."

Those who favor such programs justify their position by appealing to the fact that many homes in this country simply are not providing even a minimal training for their children. The claim is that the home is chiefly responsible for many, if not all, of the problems which the world faces today. If the home will not perform its duties, someone else will have to do it. Hence these men argue: "It is not the parent, it is not the child, it is society that has the responsibility." "Society has the ultimate responsibility for the well-being and optimum development of all children."

And so a program is being pushed which is called, "Comprehensive Child Development". It assumes almost all the responsibility for rearing children from the age of six months to at least six years — and longer if necessary. It seeks a program which will place the responsibility for all the care of the child — educational, nutritional, and emotional — upon society as a whole; by which is meant, the responsibility will be placed upon behavioristic educators, psychologists and sociologists who operate government-financed programs. As now proposed, this education would take place through "specially designed health, social, and educational programs (including afterschool, summer, weekend, vacation, and overnight programs.)"

How far is the program advanced? There are already many books on the market advocating this type of program. Popular magazines and television programs have taken up the cause. But more ominously, already bills to set up such a program have been before the Congress. In 1971 Representative John Brademas (Democrat-Indiana) and Senator Walter Mondale (Democrat-Minnesota) introduced separate but similar legislation in the House and Senate to finance such a program. The bill provided for funding of such a program not only, but it also provides for the use of "Child advocates". The idea behind child advocates is that certain specialists would be provided by the program to work with parents to teach them how to bring up their children. If, in the judgment of those who are in charge of such a program, parents are not doing a good job, advocates would enter the home and direct education even within the home. Apparently, the authority in the home would be transferred to these advocates. If parents disagreed, the opinion of the advocates would take precedence.

This bill passed both House and Senate, but was vetoed by President Nixon in December of 1971. A revised version was introduced in the Senate in 1972, and died in the House. But supporters of the movement have vowed to continue the fight until their measures are adopted. Senator Mondale is quoted as saying: "I will continue fighting for child development and child care legislation until we get a bill enacted."

So far, the bills which have been introduced have made the program voluntary. But the article notes that this is done only to attempt to quiet conservative opposition. There are already some who are promoting compulsory attendance and participation in such a program.

There are a few points which are worth noting. In the first place, while the program is ostensibly directed towards those homes where child-rearing is not done, the whole point is nonetheless, that the government is determined that her citizenry shall be so trained and educated that all the citizens are so many faithful followers of the men in power. And this is surely Anti-christ. It is not difficult to imagine that the time will come when the government will consider genuine Reformed, covenantal education also a threat to her well-being. The government need not go much further in the direction in which it is now going to take the position that Christians are a threat to the state, and that the education these Christians provide for their children produces people who are similar threats. So the government will insist on the right to train our children.

In the second place, such programs constitute the gravest possible threat to the Church. From a human

point of view, it seems impossible that God's covenant could ever be continued if such programs were put into effect and made compulsory. God Himself has tied the continuation of His covenant in the line of generations inseparably to covenant training. Take covenant training away, and the covenant lines are lost.

In the third place, the people of God have the assurance however, that the gates of hell cannot

prevail against the Church. In every assault they are defeated, for Christ fights for His own cause. And He is sovereign.

Finally, all these things give urgency to the calling to covenant parents to be faithful and train their children in the way they should go. Included in this training there ought also to be warnings of the dangers ahead which we and our children will have to face before the Lord comes again.

The Orthodoxy of "Present Truth"

In the last couple of years, many of our people have seen and read a magazine called "Present Truth". They have been impressed with the orthodoxy of this magazine, especially with its telling criticism of the Neo-Pentacostalist movement and with its sturdy defense of the Reformational doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Apparently however, this magazine is not as orthodox as it sometimes appears to be.

In a recent issue of *Christian News*, the editor points out that the authors of this magazine deny the truth of the immortality of the soul. In fact, the magazine is quoted as claiming that Luther himself denied this truth. A writer in the magazine is quoted as saying: "It follows that I dare not regard my death, even under the aspect of biological mask, as something that no longer strikes the real me, since I am immortal, but moves on bypassing my soul. No, all of me goes down into death. Nothing gives me the right to reject the totality of man, which the Scriptures proclaim in connection with the disaster of death, and suddenly split him into body and soul, into a perishable and an imperishable I-segment."

We are not sufficiently acquainted with the magazine to know what the theology of the editors is in other matters. It seems reasonable to conclude that the denial of such a central truth would lead inevitably to the denial of other truths as well. Those who read this magazine are therefore urged to read it with discernment.

News From Our Churches

November 14, 1974

Among the many bulletins which form the major source of news for this column, I have one, this time, of the Protestant Reformed Worship Services held in Memorial West Community Club, of Houston, Texas. Since it gives something of a picture of Rev. Harbach's regular labors there, I'd like to pass along some of its contents. "Sunday School (For Children and Adults) 9:30 a.m. Today's Lesson (No. 13) is in the Book of Joshua (1-4), on "The Crossing of the Jordan." Next Sunday's Lesson (No. 14), is in Josh. 5:10-15; 6-8 on "The Fall of, Jericho and Ai." Parents are urged to use 'Our Guide' at home, going over the lesson and the memory verses with the children.

"Morning Service — 10:30 a.m. Afternoon Service — 3:30 p.m.

"Mid-week Meeting — Wednesday — 7:30 p.m. At the home of . . . Studying the Reformed Confession, we continue with Art. 26, on Christ's Intercession, noting that it is exclusive, it is particular, it is compassionate, it is effectual, it is prevalent, it is perpetual . . .

"Reformed Witness Hour, KFMK, 98 mg, Every Sunday at 2:30 p.m. Amid the din of cults, Modernism and Arminianism, the preaching of true Calvinism may be heard.

"Catechism Classes, Saturday Morning, Pastor's Apartment."

* * * * *

Last time I passed along a few excerpts of letters from Rev. Harbach. For lack of space, I had to forego reference to some of their lighter parts. Perhaps I could insert a little of that here. In them, for example, he described, as only Rev. Harbach can, the Houston freeway traffic, with which he must frequently contend in the course of his work there. "Advanced far beyond 'clover leaves,' " he writes, "we now have 'spaghetti bowls' merging into merges. . . . Cars mass over the winding strip of concrete like so many ants scrambling pell-mell over the serpentine coils of a monstrous fire-breathing dragon." Visitors, he continues, would likely not see much of that "ominously buzzing, snapping, tail-lashing, fire-belching dragon." It's apparent, however, not only that Rev. Harbach finds it necessary to make frequent use of the Houston freeways, but that he's never far from its *sounds*, because of the proximity of his residence. "Even in the quiet and relative safety of our beds," he says, "the dragon's roar is an ubiquitous witness that it never sleeps."

In another letter Rev. Harbach made mention of the matter of becoming accustomed to the regional dialect. "The language barrier," he reported, "is slowly being overcome. E.g., two Texas words learned: 1. *har* and 2. *yawl*, as in 'Har yawl, podnuh?'"

* * * * *

From an October bulletin of First Church we read the following concerning our former missionary to Jamaica:

(continued on back page)

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet, the Lord willing, in regular session on January 8, 1975, at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than ten days prior to the convening of this Session.

Jon Huiskens
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. J. Synders, in the loss of her husband, MR. JOHN SYNDERS.

May the Lord comfort her in her bereavement, and may she know that He who controls all things doeth them well.

Mrs. T. Newhof, Pres.
Mrs. C. Pastoor, Sec'y.

Know the standard
and follow it.



Read the
STANDARD BEARER!

"During the time that Rev. G. Lubbers awaits God's direction concerning his future labors, the consistory has requested of him to assist the pastor and elders in the visitation of the sick. This he has kindly consented to do. The pastor will continue his visits as here-to-fore, and the visits of Rev. Lubbers will be in addition to these."

A couple of weeks later, incidentally, First's bulletin noted that Rev. Lubbers had received the call from Pella.

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There have been a number of interesting beginning-of-the-season gatherings recently, at least if we're able to judge from topics announced in various church bulletins. Among them are the following:

At the Convocation Exercises of South Holland Protestant Reformed School, Rev. Engelsma spoke on "The Wisdom of an Ant." At the Fall Mass Meeting of the Sunday School Association, Rev. C. Hanko spoke on "The Responsibilities of the Parents in Relation to the Sunday School." At the Annual Reformation Day Lecture in the Grand Rapids' area, held this year in Hudsonville Public School Auditorium, Rev. Van Baren spoke on "The Relevance of the Reformation and the Creeds." At the Mr. and Mrs. League Meeting, held in Southeast Church, Rev. Van Overloop spoke on "Marriage: A Battlefield? A Blessed Union? Or Just Co-existence?" At the Men's League Meeting, held in Hudsonville Church, Prof. R. Decker spoke on "The Church in Glory and the Continuation of History." At the Ladies' League Meeting, held in Southwest Church, Prof. Hanko spoke on "The Relationship of Mental Disturbance and Sin." And Prof. Decker delivered a lecture in the Kalamazoo Christian High School auditorium, on the topic "The Foolishness of Preaching" — a lecture which he had delivered a week earlier in Randolph, Wisconsin.

* * * * *

On Monday, November 11, Prof. Hoeksema underwent ear surgery at St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Rapids. He returned to his home on Wednesday, which was earlier than had been anticipated, and, at the time of this writing, was making a good recovery. He expected to be absent from his classes at the Seminary for a period of about two weeks.

D.D.

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