BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

May - 1954

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For Protestant Reformed Youth

VOL. 14 MAY — 1954 NO. 4

What is Protestant Reformed?

by Gise Van Baren

What is a table? Something which has four legs and a flat surface, you say? I can think of several things which fit such a definition and yet are not tables, for instance a stool. Besides, a table does not always have four legs. Something at which one eats? There are many tables which do not fit that definition and a table is not a necessary place at which to eat. It is rather difficult to define a simple thing like a table, isn't it? It is usually rather difficult to give any definition with a complete degree of accuracy. And a question as "What is Protestant Reformed?" likewise can not be answered in a short article as this completely or comprehensibly.

The very name "Protestant Reformed" suggests at least two things. First, because it is an organization it must have a history. That history, therefore, must be taken into consideration when any definition or explanation is given. What was Protestant Reformed in 1924 must be also Protestant Reformed now, and what was not Protestant Reformed then surely can not be considered Protestant Reformed today.

Secondly, the very fact that we have the name Protestant Reformed should indicate that here there is something distinctive. People who claim that we should not be distinctive should not be so foolish to claim to be Protestant Reformed and should be sorry that they ever claimed themselves to be such. You never call a Ford a Buick, do you? They are both cars and yet it is very easy to tell them apart. They have certain distinguishing marks. So must also be the case with any church. If this were not the case, it would be rather foolish to ask such a question as "What is Protestant Reformed?"

What is Protestant Reformed? Some have claimed that the answer to this question and all the actions to maintain that answer have come from "headquarters." Such insinuations are quite plain. Oh, yes, that which is Protestant Reformed does originate from a source — and that is not the "manse at Doon" or any other manse — the only Source, God, as He has revealed Himself in His Word. Also the confessions, which are based on Scripture, must be included when one speaks of that which is Protestant Reformed. These two, Scripture

and the Confessions, tell us what is Protestant Reformed. Indeed, there are many Reformed churches which claim that they too are based on these same two. But we must know that always sometime in their history there has been some departure from these two standards. And when such a departure is made the church is called upon to free itself of the guilty ones, and if necessary, the faithful must separate themselves and become a separate organization. That is what happened in 1924 and that is what is happening today. Although others may claim the same basis, they yet do not have the truth in its greatest degree of purity. They yet set forth some form of the lie. It was in opposition to the lie which gave rise to our churches in 1924 and it was the lie which our churches had to fight in its own midst even recently. Therefore we can once more say that what is Protestant Reformed is also Scriptural and confessional.

To be thoroughly Scriptural is to be completely Protestant Reformed. What, then, is Scriptural? Of course, these few lines can not begin to include all of what is presented in Scripture. Scripture is entirely too rich, too deep for something like that to be done. However, a few words can be said about it. First of all, we must know and believe that Scripture is the divinely inspired Word of God. And in that Word God reveals Himself as sovereign God to man, His creature. God is God and God is All. Predestination: election and reprobation is the work of God. Everything is centered in God and His Christ. That is Scriptural and therefore Protestant Reformed.

There are some who might claim that the Protestant Reformed reject Scripture in spite of all they say. "For," some might possibly say, "the Protestant Reformed do not believe that one must go out and hang oneself. Although such a statement can not be found literally in the Bible, yet it does have its **equivalent.** For do we not read in John 13:27b, 'Then said Jesus unto him, that thou doest, do quickly.' And again in Matthew 27:5, 'And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.' And do we not also read in Luke 10:37b, 'Then said Jesus . . ., Go, and do thou likewise.' "

Now such argumentation is plainly foolish, yet something like that is being done today. What is Protestant Reformed? It is all of Scripture that we believe. None of it is rejected. Nor are isolated passages used to prove any error. Scripture is a whole and must be used and interpreted as such.

And Protestant Reformed is confessional. In fact, we believe that our churches are the only ones which hold the truths of the confessions so completely as our own. Many other churches and individuals hold also the confessions but they twist and corrupt them to form a basis for their own false doctrines.

What is Protestant Reformed? The Heidelberg Catechism tells us what is Protestant Reformed. You should know what that is by now after hearing one sermon every Sunday based on its method of instruction. "What is thy only comfort in life and death? That I am not my own but belong to my faithful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Then the Catechism goes on to treat those things necessary to live and die happily: "how great my sins and miseries are, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries, and how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance."

The Belgic Confession is also Protestant Reformed, or possibly I could say that Protestant Reformed is to be in accordance with the Belgic confession. That tells us of God and His work in time, of Christ, of the true and false church, of the final judgment. It should be read

often if one desires to know what is Protestant Reformed.

Don't forget that the Canons of Dordt are Protestant Reformed no matter how people may use them to prove otherwise. They are often summerized by the word **tulip:** T for total depravity; U for unconditional election; L for limited atonement; I for irresistable grace; P for perseverance of the saints.

What is Protestant Reformed? You hear it every Sunday in the Apostolic Creed: "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

Does that mean that the Protestant Reformed have developed all the truths of Scripture completely and fully? Have we reached the pinnacle of doctrinal development? Scripture is too rich for that. But the Protestant Reformed by God's grace have developed the doctrines presented in Scripture to an extent never before attained by any other church. By God's grace we are what we are and by God's grace we shall be and shall continue to develop.

Now all these things may seem to be quite self-evident. But let me emphasize

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EDITORIALS

A True Confession

Young people — as well as adults — like to read newspapers and magazines in order to keep up with the news of the day. Some schools distribute, to its students, small leaflets that contain articles about current events, in order to encourage students to read news items of the day; other schools make it possible for its students to purchase major well — known news magazines at greatly reduced subscription prices, in order to stimulate, amongst its youthful readers, a habit of continuous news interest. In this way, and in many other ways, young people grow up with an interest in the news of the day.

So that this interest does not lag, the news magazines cater to its readers appetites, by providing many and varied articles, editorials, and picture stories about the news of the day, and the major news personalities of the current scene. Hence, a partial list of topics covered would include news about: war and peace, government, industry, agriculture, and education. The entertainment world receives widespread coverage, with emphasis on news that revolves around the two names (with all that these names imply): Broadway and Hollywood. Even the contemporary religious scene receives its share of attention. Not news concerning the history that the Protestant Reformed Churches is making, obviously, makes the columns of the major news magazines of the American press, for news about our churches has an appeal only to a limited number of readers. It is limited to people who are interested in news about the Reformed church world. Hence, news about our churches receives attention only in a small trickle of the printed work that flows like a torrential stream from the press.

To the young people who read articles about current events in the newspapers and news magazines of the day we suggest: Notice what is the basic attitude, or philosophy, of this press. It may be summed up as follows: All is of Men; of Man, through Man, and unto Man are all things. Another way of stating the same idea is this: the world is not passing away; it will continue forever. These are the basic attitudes, the foundation stones of the world — and — life building that news editors would have us construct. Even if the alarming cries of the reports of the "scientists-who-have-turned-"evangelists" of the atom, who bring a message of doom by destruction — even if these reports are discounted, the basic belief and attitude of the world, is that Man, to be saved, must save himself. Indirectly, if not directly, news of this Atomic Age speaks of unprecedented progress and enlightenment, in which the civilization of our day — even with the constant threat of war — will reach new heights of achievement. Thus may be summed up the world and life view of the present world in which we live as it is reflected in the news periodicals of the day.

Now, the question arises: What does the Christian young man or woman of our Protestant Reformed Churches say to this view, as he or she meets it, wherever it is found? The answer to this question has two parts: A negative and a positive part.

Negatively, the Christian says that the view of the world that all is of, through, and unto Man is a denial of the truth that man is totally depraved, and cannot save himself one bit. He is ethically and spiritually dead — a corpse. Secondly, this same view under consideration, denies the truth of God's absolute and divine predestination. Further, it rejects the truth that God is the Lord — the only Lord of heaven and earth.

Positively, the Christian young person avers and affirms the truth of God's predestination: that God has sovereignly determined whatsoever comes to pass, in all the things, in all the world around us — concerning all men, angels, and events. This work is the divine and absolute predestination of God. Therefore, we say that in the world of economics, government, agriculture, industry, business — in fact, in every sphere of life, God is the Sovereign Disposer of moral beings and events. Thus it is, that in the religious scene, God is the Sovereign over all that takes place, even in the present disruption of our denominational church life. In this truth is our only comfort, in life, or in death, in prosperity or adversity, for time and eternity. As Protestant Reformed young people, we maintain, and confess, as the truth of God's Holy Word, the Bible, the absolute, divine predestination of God.

Nor is this all we may say. If it were, we would not be **Protestant Reformed.** In distinction from some other Christians who agree to a divine predestination of God, we say: "Yes, that is so. God does determine all things, whatsoever comes to pass." But, in addition, we add this thought: all things that come to pass — even God's reprobation of the wicked and the ungodly in the way of their sins — must and does serve the election of God's Church, the body of believers of which Christ is the Head. Therefore, Protestant Reformed young people confess that the wicked deeds of wicked men do not hinder the counsel of God, but are according to His counsel, and thereby serve the Salvation of God's Church. This truth is the strength and the hope of God's young people, and all God's people. God's people know this truth, too. And they confess it, in the midst of the world, the world that lieth in darkness, that is fast hurling itself to its own destruction.

Now we ask: How is this? How is it that God's young people are able, and do confess this truth? Especially when the world mocks and derides the truth of God's predestination, calling it, falsely, "fatalism." Obviously, to make such a confession takes spiritual courage, which could never arise in the heart of a man, as a prerequisite. What is the answer to the question of this paragraph?

There is only one answer to the question, and that is this: Christ, in His people, through His Spirit and Word, does it. It is all of Christ; nothing of sinful man. We belong to sinful Man; therefore we do not do it; we never could — apart from Christ. Christ does it, in His people. By nature, all we do is sin. Such a confession, of the sovereign and absolute predestination of God is a spiritual work; it is a work of Christ, unconditionally realized in the hearts of His people. Because God's people confess the predestination of God concerning all things, it is God's work in them. In this truth God's young people stand, by His grace. Therefore they say: "Not of, through, or unto Man," but they say, in praise: "Of God, in Christ; through God, in Christ; unto God, in Christ, are all things."

James A. McCollam

In writing you can reach a few persons. In prayer you reach all and take them with you to the throne of grace.

QUESTION BOX

Question: Was Naaman, the Syrian captain, saved or not? What is your opinion about this?

Answer: Let us get the details of this incident before us. II Kings 5:1-18. Naaman was commander-in-chief of the king's army. By the dispensation of the Lord's providence he had gained the victory over the enemy of his people. In the words of the text, "By him the Lord had given victory unto Syria." It shows that he was an able general and a brave warrior, "a mighty man of valour. "And so he was "great before his master," the king, i.e., highly esteemed and valued. But he was a leper. His disease would soon force him into retirement, if it already had not done so. The king was troubled and saddened.

Now the household of Naaman included a Jewess, a young maiden, who stood before Naaman's wife. Some Syrian troops had made an incursion into the land of Israel and had returned to the homeland with the girl as their captive. But she was not hateful and bitter. On the contrary, aware of her master's plight, she told her mistress that there was still hope for his recovery. Dwelling in Samaria was a prophet who would recover him from his leprosy. How the maiden wished that he was before the prophet. It shows her abiding faith in the God of Israel for whose saving might she was witnessing in this heathen family.

But Naaman seems to have hesitated to go to the prophet. It was not until the king, who in the meantime had heard what the maiden had said, urged him to go, that he went. "Go, by all means, go," were his words to his servant.

Seeing that the Syrians had been actively hostile to Israel, Naaman may have doubted whether the prophet was willing to perform the cure, and whether Israel's God would be entreated for one such as he. He was a foreigner. Account had also to be taken of the king of Israel. He might prove resentful. Besides, his disease was known to be incurable. Whoever heard of the recovery of a leper. Still, he could not have been without some hope. So he finally departed as his master had commanded.

Presumably to make the going of Naaman smooth, the king wrote a letter for his servant to deliver to the king of Israel, a curt letter, imperious in tone. It read, "Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him from his leprosy." That was not a petition but rather a command. But why should the **king** of Israel be thus mandated? The maiden had directed attention to the **prophet** in Samaria. It cannot be supposed that the Syrian king did not know this. The simple explanation is that he meant to be telling the king of Israel that, though he well understood that the one to perform the cure was the **prophet,** he nevertheless was holding him, the king, fully responsible for the recovery of his servant; that therefore he had better see to it that the prophet and the servant be brought together, and also that no harm befall the servant while he tarried in Israel's land.

But the king of Israel failed to grasp the intention of the letter. He supposed that he himself was expected to perform

the cure. So he concluded that the command was a trap to bring about trouble. Upset and saddened, he rent his clothes as he exclaimed, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man from his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

But though his reasoning had been correct, his consternation was without excuse. For there was a prophet in Israel. But of the presence of this prophet he was little aware. With the prophet he had little to do. He wanted nothing to do with him now. He did not believe that he was a man of God and that therefore he could help in a case such as this. Being unbelieving, he was afraid of men.

It was told the prophet how the king had reacted. Rebuking the king for his unbelief, he told him to send the Syrian to him, that he might know that there is a prophet in Israel, i.e., a God — the only true God, the God of all the earth and Israel's Saviour — who maketh Himself known in His saving might, through His servants the prophets, to every one that seeketh after Him, whether that one be Jew or Gentile.

Doing as he was told, the king of Israel sent Naaman to the prophet, and there before the door of the prophet's house, the "great one" now stood, he and his retinue of horses and chariots and mules bearing treasures of gold and silver and costly apparel.

But the prophet did not go out to him but sent a messenger. The reason was not that he was lacking in decoram or was afraid of the leprosy or was influenced by pride. But he wished to have this foreigner understand that the cause of his being helped lay not in his rank, princely magnificance and the glory of his earthly honor and riches; that by such things the prophet was not in the least effected. And that he had to wash seven times in the Jordan in order to be healed was calculated to teach him that there was no healing power in the prophet, nor that he was cured by the application of external means but that his help stood solely in the name of Israel's God. For he knew as well as anybody that there was no curative virtue in the waters of the Jordan.

But the prophet's manner of dealing with Naaman kindled his wrath. He felt as if he was being scorned. He wanted to be received in a manner becoming to his rank. He thought that the prophet would surely have come out and stood — stood in awe of him — and called on the name of the Lord his God, and struck his hand over the place, and recovered the leper (vs. 13). What a disappointment to his pride. And as to the instruction that he wash in the Jordan — "it is a deep, sluggish, discolored stream" — what foolishness! In his own words, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" ("Both rivers, as mountain streams, have clean fresh water, and Damascus is celebrated today for its pure and healthy water"). No. Naaman, the waters of Abana and Pharpar cannot avail. Only the waters of the Jordan — the blood of Jesus — cleanses from all sin, can cleanse thee from thy leprosy.

But Naaman was still unbelieving. And so he turned from the messenger of the prophet and went his way in a rage. His pride had been injured! But his servants remonstrated with him. With remarkable tact and in a manner that took full cognizance of the fact that it was their lord whom they were addressing, they rebuked his pride and repeated to him the Gospel that they had heard from the lips of the messenger of the prophet, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and

thou shalt be clean." They say to their lord, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee to do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean," that is to say, if Naaman had been told that in order to be recovered from his leprosy he had to **co-operate** with God by doing some thing, he would have gone to work immediately without a murmur however difficult of performance that thing; but now that he was told that there was nothing for him to do to be healed, that there was nothing he could do to be healed in that with men his disease was incurable, so that all that was demanded of him is that he believe in the Lord God of Israel — the Christ of God — and as an expression of his faith wash in the Jordan, he flew into a rage.

The reasoning of the servants struck home. Naaman's pride vanished like a mist. Without another word, he did as the prophet had instructed. He washed in the Jordan, and verily, he was clean, clean! For the Lord had given to Naaman what He had demanded of him — faith in Israel's God.

In his joyful amazement and as moved by a new born conviction, i.e., conviction born from above, he exclaimed, when he had again returned to the prophet to beseech him that he take from his hand a blessing, for he was grateful to God more than words could express, — he then exclaimed, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel," meaning to say that all other God's are vanity. And he asks for two mules' burden of earth for an altar that he will build unto Jehovah in the homeland. For his mind is made up. Henceforth he will offer neither burnt offering or sacrifice unto any God except unto the Lord.

To my mind what is here related of Naaman shuts us up to the view that he was truly converted to the Lord and saved. This is the point, I believe, that Christ lays stress on, when, to rebuke the unbelieving Jews for scoffing at him, He refers to the widow of Sarepta to whom Elijah was sent and then to Naaman the Syrian who was healed by Elisha (Luke 15:25-27). The story of Naaman's conversion is prophetic history, i.e., it foretells the calling of the Gentiles in the Gospel period. G.M.O.

WHAT IS PROTESTANT REFORMED

(Continued from Page 3)

that it is very necessary to know the Scriptures in order to be Protestant Reformed. First of all it is necessary to know Scripture in order to ". . . .be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I Peter 3:15

Secondly, we should be as the brethren at Berea who, according to Acts 17:11, "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Only in this way can we be sure that that which the Protestant Reformed teach is in complete harmony with Scripture, and will remain so through the years which lie ahead.

We Gratefully Acknowledge:

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Young People's News

Mr. Al Heemstra, left, and Mr. Clarence Prince, of First Church, during recess at the April 6 Mass Meeting. (Photo by Bieboer)

April 6 was the date of our Young People's Mass Meeting held in our Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

The meeting began with the singing of a few psalter numbers under the direction of Mr. Al Heemstra. After we opened with prayer and Scripture was read, we were favored with a duet by Nancy and John Bult, accompanied by Fran Flikkema.

Rev. G. Lubbers was our speaker for the evening. He gave us a most timely and edifying speech on "Temptations."

In his introduction Rev. Lubbers pointed out that we have temptations as no other people in the world; therefore, we must give strong opposition. We know that we are so weak we cannot stand a moment. Our consolation is that we have a strong God.

In his first point the speaker brought out the meaning of temptations. Temptations are two fold: As to the view point of Satan's temptations, the temptations of the world, he tries to make us fall. Or from the view point of God, who is as the gold-smith who casts the gold into the fire to purify it. God sends us temptations to make us trust in Him, love Him more. Temptations either make us fall—Satan's view point, or that we stand—God's view point.

Rev. Lubbers went on to show us the forms in which we meet and see temptations. Our temptations are unique according to those of the world. We are tempted to forget the first table of the law, and live only according to the second. The cares of life tempt us—when we worry we are not trusting in God. The desire for riches, honor, a crown, reputation, or a career are also temptations which surround our young people. The choosing of a life's companion is another temptation. Who you chose must first of all be a brother or sister in the Lord. Whoever you chose must be sound in doctrine. You must first of all be able to sit at the table of the Lord with her before you can sit together at the kitchen table. The home must be such that you be one in doctrine and faith and then you will be able to have peace in the home. The temptation is to see first if she is good-looking. We tend to put the material before the spiritual. When catechism and society meetings are over let not your life be empty. Plan your vacation so that you can be with the people of God.

Finally he pointed out that we cannot live an upright life without being sound in doctrine. We have a difficult position in the world, but also a glorious calling—to stand, to break the fiery darts of the devil and say "it is written." God will give us strength to the battle. Be of good cheer—I have overcome the world.

After a short recess we were favored first with another number by Nancy and John. And then Rev. Heys showed us his slides of his trip to Lynden. His pictures certainly displayed the wonders of our God.

Ruth Dykstra

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Living Out Of Good Works

(IV)

We have discussed at length in our former article that faith can in no wise be constructed as a condition to our salvation. In no sense of the word is our salvation ever dependent upon our act of believing. But we are directly concerned with good works. We are busy with the **christian living** of the child of God. And therefore we must discuss now the relation between salvation and good works. We have spent some time in discussing the relation of faith and salvation because the activity of faith can be listed in a general way under the good works of the child of God. And therefore what is true of the activity of faith is true of all the good works of the Christian. And our former discussion of faith therefore serves as a ground for our discussion now.

As you know, those who hold to conditional theology speak at one time or another of just about all the good works of a person to be conditions to something else. They speak, for example, of prayer as a condition to the experience of the forgiveness of sins. They speak of the works of the law as a condition to our salvation. And sooner or later they have made all the acts of the child of God conditions. Now it is not our purpose in this and succeeding articles to criticize at length this conception. There comes a time when negative criticism must cease. The church cannot go on indefinitely pointing out their erroneous way to them, but must again return to positive thinking. Nor is it our purpose to enter into a long and detailed discussion on the term condition. That has been done in the past by others who are more qualified. Let just these few remarks suffice. In the first place, it was at one time common to use the term condition as meaning "in the way of." "On condition of prayer" was interpreted to mean "in the way of prayer." Now in the first place that idea of "in the way of" is certainly Scriptural as we hope to point out in some future article. But secondly, it has not yet been proved that the term "condition" can be used in that sense. And it is certain that the term has had an unreformed connotation in the past. And to say the least it is very confusing to use it in the sense of "in the way of" when it has not very often been used in that sense. Also it is evident by now that the term is very dangerous. Look what it has led to in our own churches. Even though it may be used in a correct sense (which I am not ready to concede) it has led to greater heresies right in our own midst. And that in itself should be reason enough to avoid it. It should also be noticed that the term does not appear in our Canons except in the mouth of the Arminians where it is condemned.

Just one word concerning those Canons before we proceed with our subject. Those who maintain a conditional theology must necessarily grant that the term condition is not found in the Canons except in the mouth of the Arminian; but they say that the Canons only condemn conditional **election.** Well, in reality that is really condemning every form of conditions. For this reason. If election is conditional, there must necessarily be conditions in time. If on the other hand, election is not conditional in the counsel

of God there can be no conditions in time. And the opposite holds true. If there are conditions in time there must also be conditions in the counsel of God. If our salvation is conditional our salvation must also be conditional in God's counsel. And therefore our election must be conditional. To quote from Rev. Hoeksema's dictation on the Canons of Dordt, under the First Head of Doctrine, Article two under the Rejection of Errors he says, "Those who are so in love with conditions repeatedly allege that they do not believe in a conditional election; the decree of God is unconditional but note that either the application of salvation in turn is conditional because the decree is conditional or the decree is unconditional and then the application of salvation must necessarily be also unconditional for according to Scripture we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ according as He has chosen us in him. The application therefore is according to the standard of the decree."

Besides this it is not the case that the Canons only condemn conditional election. Notice with me Canons, First Head of Doctrine, **Rejection of Errors,** the third paragraph. We read "Synod **rejects** the errors of those: Who teach: That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this that he chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the words of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that he would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience, and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life."

We notice these things in this article.

1. Synod rejects the error of those who teach that the good pleasure of God does not consist in this that God chose certain persons rather than others. That is you know the doctrine of election. God chose certain persons rather than others. This the Arminians deny and this denial the Canons reject.

2. Synod rejects the error of those who teach that there are all kinds of conditions; such as the works of the law, and the whole order of things.

3. Synod rejects the error of those who teach that out of all these things God chose faith, which by its very nature is undeserving (that undoubtedly means faith as a gift of God) as a condition to **salvation.** Not election but salvation. Of course the one is implied in the other, but nevertheless, Synod expressly states salvation here. And the Canons also say that even faith as considered a gift of God, God did not choose as a condition to salvation.

Thus the Canons very expressly condemn the term, and that should be sufficient reason for us to leave the term alone completely. We have no need of it in our vocabulary, therefore why use it when it is so dangerous and when we view the disastrous results within our own group.

The article can very well be paraphrased this way: "Synod rejects the errors of those who teach that the good pleasure and purpose of God is that he chose the act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as a condition of salvation."

And so Scripture and the Confessions teach that all the good works of the Christian are only the glorious fruit of the wonderful work of salvation God has worked within us.

Herman Hanko

TRUTH VS. ERROR

The Opponent's Gospel

Strictly speaking it is not correct to speak or write of the opponent's **gospel** in connection with the battle of Truth vs. Error. The Gospel is good news. It consists of glad tidings. It is the message of joy and peace in the Lord. Strictly speaking our opponent has no good news for he utters only the lie and the lie is always bad . . . . very bad indeed!

Yet, the arch-counterfeiter, the father of lies, through his apostles (II Cor. 11:13) brings something which so closely resembles the gospel of Christ of which it is only a parody that thousands are deceived by it. It is this **gospel** of Satan that the apostle refers to when he writes to the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto **another gospel,** which is not another, but there be some which trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." (Gal. 1:6,7) With increasing subtilty and deception that false gospel of Satan has continued to be preached (throughout the world) since the days of the apostles. And always this awful curse is brought down upon those that heard it, "But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8)

Now this "gospel" of our opponent does not advocate a system of revolutionary principles nor does it teach a program of anarchism. Its author is too subtil to do that. It does not promote strife and war but aims at peace and unity. It doesn't attempt to set a mother against her daughter, or a father against his son, but it fosters the fraternal spirit whereby the human race is regarded as one great "brotherhood." It does not degenerate and belittle the natural man but this "gospel" improves and uplifts him. It advocates culture and education and appeals to the best that is in man. Its aim is to make this world such a comfortable and congenial place that Christ's absence from it will not be felt and God will not be needed. It endeavors to occupy man so much with **this** world that he has neither time nor inclination to think of **the world to come.** It propagates the principles of self-sacrifice, charity and benevolence, and teaches us to live for the good of others and to be kind to all. It appeals strongly to the carnal mind and is popular with the masses because it ignores the solemn facts that by nature man is a fallen creature, alienated from the life of God, and dead in trespasses and sins, and that his only hope lies in being born again.

The apostles of this perverted gospel are not saloon-keepers but for the most part ordained ministers(?) Thousands who occupy our modern pulpits are no longer engaged in presenting the fundamentals of the christian faith but have turned aside from the truth and have given heed unto fables. Instead of magnifying the enormity of sin and setting forth its eternal consequences, they minimize it by declaring that sin is merely ignorance or the absence of good. Instead of warning their hearers to "flee from the wrath to come" they make God a liar by declaring that He is too loving and merciful to send any of His own creatures to eternal torment. Instead of declaring that "without shedding of blood

there is no remission" they merely hold up Christ as the great exemplar and exhort their hearers to "follow in His steps." Their message may sound very plausible and their aim appear very praiseworthy, yet, they are false teachers who bring the gospel of the enemy and are laboring to deceive.

Heresy is not so much a blunt and total denial of the truth as the perversion of it. That is why a half lie is always more dangerous than a complete repudiation of truth. That's why, too, the gospel of Satan has strong appeal and easily deceives. It is disguised as truth. The apostles of Satan never come forth and flatly deny the fundamental truths of the Word of God but they tacitly acknowledge them and then proceed to give an erroneous interpretation and a false application. To do otherwise would be to defeat their own purpose which is to deceive the weak and simple. Thus, for example, they would not deny the existance of a personal God but taking this for granted they proceed further to falsly describe His character until they have "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man." (Rom. 1:23) Or, to express it differently, they speak of God and in doing so they make of Him a puppet. Then, too, they would not ignore Christ altogether and desist from mentioning Him. On the contrary, this gospel acknowledges Him to be the best man that ever lived. Attention is called to His deeds of compassion and His works of mercy, the beauty of His character and the sublimity of His teaching. His life is eulogized BUT HIS VICARIOUS DEATH IS IGNORED AND THE EFFACACIOUSNESS OF HIS ATONING WORK AND THE REDEMPTIVE MERIT OF HIS RESURRECTION IS IGNORED. The latter is regarded as one of the credulities of a superstitious age. That Jesus Christ was "delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" is denied in this perverted gospel. (Rom. 4:25)

Such then are but a few of the tenets of the gospel of our opponent. In distinction from the true Gospel, the Gospel of Christ, this gospel of Satan teaches in some form, manner or fashion salvation by works. It worships the creature instead of the creator. It announces that salvation is by the improvement of character which reverses the order of God's Word — character improvement is by, as the fruit of, salvation (regeneration). It makes the acts of men antecedent to the work of God in order that the sovereignty of man may be magnified and the glory of God debased. Such is the devil's purpose in propogating this perverted gospel for it is his chief weapon by which he attempts to oppose God and do harm to His cause. The disguised lie, the camouflaged truth are the greatest enemies of the church and more particularly of every child of God whose joy and purpose it is to walk in the truth.

By this evil gospel many are deceived. The truth today is no longer expounded in the pulpit and the Scriptures are little read and still less diligently studied. This affords the devil an excellent opportunity to make advances and disseminate the lie with apparent success. The demands of this rushing age are so numerous that the multitudes have little time and still less inclination to make preparation for their meeting and knowing God. Hence, the majority, who are too indolent to search for themselves, are left at the mercy of those whom they pay to search for them; many of whom betray their trust by studying and expounding economic and social problems rather than the Oracles of God. Yet, as the battle continues and apostasy and belief of the lie increases according to the Word of God, the blessed truth which Jesus ut-

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MILITARY MAIL BAG

Dear Fellows:

Once again we start to write something for your section in Beacon Lights. This time we have a letter to bring to our readers.

March 21, 1954

Dear Everett:

Just a few lines to let you know that I am now receiving the Beacon Lights and enjoy them. I hope to receive the Standard Bearer soon, but as yet I haven't. I sent my address in so it should be on its way over here.

I am now in 8 weeks of Supply School, of which 2 weeks are already finished. I am now at Ford Ord, California, for my school and then I go back to my unit in Fort Lawton, Washington, where I have been stationed the last 6 months. Before that I took my training in Fort Bliss, Texas. I now have about 12 months in service which I am glad of. After this 8 weeks I will first go home for a 20 day leave, then back to Fort Lawton, Washington.

I have received the last 2 issues of Beacon Lights and really look forward to them, where I find much good reading material.

I have been able to attend the Christian Reformed Church in Seattle which was very nice and I was able to work it so that I could attend every week.

I am on TDY (temporary duty) for this 8 weeks, then I look forward to going home to Hull, Iowa. I also hope to go to our church in Redlands, if possible. Well, I am not much of a letter writer, but I thought I'd try anyway.

Yours in Christ,
Pete Hoekstra.

Pfc. Peter Hoekstra
Hq. & Hq. Btry, 51st F.A. Bn.
Fort Ord, California.

Thank you Pete for your letter. It was good and very welcome.

* * *

When I was overseas, I was stationed in one city that I would like to write about in this issue. Maybe you fellows are at a place that you would like to tell about. Let us hear from you about the experiences you have in the service.

The city that I would like to write about is Nora, Japan. Nora is one of the sacred Japanese cities. Its beautiful temples, which are recognized as the most important in Japan, are located in a natural grove of 1250 acres, called Nora Park. This park is sometimes known as "Deer Park" and is the largest and most beautiful in Japan. It is a natural woodland with trees, temples and over 1000 tame deer which before 1868 were regarded as divine messengers, roaming about in pairs or in small groups. It is quite easy to walk up to a group of them and take snapshots or feed them.

Nora was the first permanent capital of Japan, having been selected for this honor in 709 A. D. It continued as such from 710 to 784 covering the reigns of three Emperors and four Empreas-Regents. Nora was the birthplace of the arts, crafts, literature and recorded history of Japan; for here were the first written histories of the nation. At the height of its glory Nora covered an extensive area with palaces, temples public buildings and many residences of noble and wealthy families. Fire destroyed many of the old Buddhist structures and physical decay

has marked these ancient edifices, yet there still exist many attractions for the sightseers. Some of the temples and shrines remain practically as they were originally.

I have a booklet and pictures of some of the wonders of Nora. I would like to give a little idea of what is there. By this you may be able to understand what the Japanese believe.

The first is the Kasuga Shrine. This Shinto Temple approached through an avenue of antique stone lanterns (about 2000 in number). The shrine was founded in 768 as the tutelary shrine of the Fujiwares. The buildings, painted a bright vermillion and hung with some 1000 metal lanterns, are celebrated for their beautiful architecture and enchanting setting. All the lanterns are gifts from those who believe in the gods of Kasuga. The stone and metal lanterns are lighted only twice a year; on the night of Setsubun Festival (Feb. 3, which I saw) and Jugoya (Aug. 15). In the rear of the main shrine is one of the local wonders, an isutree on whose trunk has been grafted six different kinds of plants; camellia, wisteria, nandin, cherry, maple and elder.

The second is the Great Buddha. This bronze image, the largest of its kind on earth, was completed in 752 A. D. It is 53.5 feet high and weighs nearly 500 ton. The face is 16 feet long and 9½ feet wide, each eye is 3.9 feet in length, each ear is 8½ feet long and the thumb is 48 feet long. The Hall of the Great Buddha is the largest wooden building in the world.

The Great Buddha, symbolized the omnipotent and omnipresent blessing of Buddha. The Emperor who ordered the image to be made wanted to rule Japan in accordance with the doctrines of the Buddhist religion and with the righteousness and benevolence of Buddha himself.

The next that we have is the Daibutsu Big Bell. This bronze bell, which is a state treasure, was cast in 752 A. D. It is the second largest in Japan (the largest being that of the Chionin in Kyoto). Its dimensions are: 13.6 feet high, base 9.2 feet in diameter, 10 inches in thickness, and 27 feet in circumference. Its weight is 48 ton. When you strike the Bell, at which sound it is said the departed souls of your relatives in the world beyond nod to the earthly signal made from this far away land of the rising sun.

I hope you may have been able to get a little idea of what the Japanese believe and whom they believe. I think that these people walked in this belief at one time, but in the last years it has been changing.

Let us hear from you fellows in the near future.

Military Mail Bag
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Tinley Park, Illinois.

TRUTH vs. ERROR

(Continued from Page 13)

tered in prayer cotinues unabated to our everlasting comfort:

"Those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." (John 17:12)

And concerning them who belong not to Christ the Scriptures testify, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (II Thess. 2:11)

Terrible words? Yes, indeed! Nevertheless, an earmark of truth, like God, is always terrible to them that love the lie!

G. Vanden Berg

Lifting the Lid . . .

Communism

Part VII

(Continued)

Our previous article ended with a remark about the Titanic. Just before God sank that steamer, which men claimed to be unsinkable, its passengers were busily engaged in eating, dancing, drinking, gambling, and minding earthly things. God was not in all of their thoughts. But when they were convinced that their lives were soon to be snuffed out by a watery grave, they were instantly terror stricken and were praying to God. Also the ship's band soon changed its tune from ragtime and jazz to:

Nearer My God to Thee
Nearer to Thee.

Was not the world terror stricken when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nakazaki. Certainly it reminded wicked men of the fact that the heavens and the earth shall pass away with a great noise and that the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Just why are people so afraid of thunder, lightning, wind, floods, hail, earthquakes, black cats, Friday the thirteenth, etc.? It is because they have an angry God to contend with. So does Communism and its secret controlling powers. Let us visit the deathbed of that infidile, Voltaire, one of the founders of Freemasonry, the parents of Modernism and Communism. Darwin, the founder of evolution, also suffered a similar experience upon his deathbed.

Although Voltaire was a confirmed hater of Christ and of Christianity as ever lived, still he showed from time to time that his own professed principles of Infidelity were never really believed in by himself. In health and strength he cried out his blasphemous "Crush the wretch!," but when the moment came for his soul to appear before the Judgment seat of "the wretch" his faith was shown and his vaunted courage failed him. The miscreant always acted against his better knowledge. His life gives us many examples of this fact. When he broke a blood vessel on one occasion, he begged his assistants to hurry for the preacher. He confessed, signed with his hand a profession of faith, asked God and the Church for pardon for his offenses, and ordered that his retraction should be printed in the public newspapers; but recovering, he commenced his war upon God anew, and died refusing all spiritual aid, and crying out in the fury of dispairs and agony, "I am abandoned by God and man." Dr. Fruchen, who witnessed the awful spectacle of his death, said to his friends, 'Would that all who have been reduced by the writings of Voltaire had been witnesses of his death, it would be impossible to hold out, in the face of such an awful spectacle.' "(Grand Orient Freemasonry Unmasked by G. F. Dillon, D.D. pp. 9-10).

Seymour Beiboer

(To be Continued)

WITH FATHER

A little boy was traveling by train. A fellow passenger asked him where he was going. He replied, "I am going with father." He did not worry about the outcome of his journey because he had implicit confidence in the loving oversight of his father. How much fretting and worrying we could save ourselves, how much joy and peace would be ours, if, being God's children through faith in His Son, we would always remember and trust in the Divine promise.

14th ANNUAL
P.R.Y.P. CONVENTION

. . . . *to be held at South Holland, Ill.*

TENTATIVE DATES: AUGUST 17, 18, 19.

Plan to attend ! !

. . . watch for further announcements.

Mr. Gise Van Daren
1132 Bates St. SE
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Oct

SOCIETY MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE ! ! !

Starting with the October issue of BEACON LIGHTS, the Bible Outlines department will be conducted by the Rev. G. Lubbers. He will discuss the book of Galatians.

Plan to study this book in your society, following the outlines supplied in BEACON LIGHTS.