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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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THE WICKED ARE LIKE THE CHAFF

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Editorial

A Witness-y Pistle to My Grandchildren

by John M. Faber

Dear Grandchildren:

As I write this letter to you we have just celebrated Easter Sunday. What we were celebrating was the fact that Christ rose from the dead on that glorious morning. But you know, nobody saw Him come out of that tomb! That's right; just *nobody* saw Him arise from the grave. And still the whole Christian world celebrated that event which nobody witnessed. The Gospels tell us what people were doing in that interval after the burial and before the resurrection of our Lord, but nobody was in that Garden when He arose. No one *saw* Him come out. That was quite different when Lazarus came out of his grave. Many people witnessed that! They saw that he was still wrapped in his grave clothes, and had to be helped out of them. But when Jesus rose from His grave no one had to help Him out of His wrappings. Those collapsed wrappings He left as a mute witness of His exalted state. No one even knew about it when it happened. How do we really know that He did arise from the dead? Witnesses, witnesses, witnesses and more witnesses; that's how.

You know what a witness it, don't you? If one sees an auto accident, and the police ask the bystanders, "Who saw what happened?" Then if you step forward and say, "I saw the whole thing. That blue car ran a red light and struck the green car", the police then say to you, "We will call you to be a witness if and when this case comes to court." Then you will be a witness. That word, witness, is a noun, but the same spelling of that word can also be a verb, and then it means the story you will tell the court. So then, a witness may witness what he saw and heard.

Were there very many who witnessed that Jesus rose from the dead? Would you settle for a number like ten million? No? I wonder how many there were. First, there were two angels all dressed in white garments who spoke to the women visitors at the gravesight. They said, "He is not here, He is risen, as He said." Those three women quickly ran to tell the Disciples. That made five witnesses. Then the ten disciples told other people; that makes fifteen. Not having seen Him, they yet testified (witnessed) to His resurrection.

Let's see now how many witnesses can we count? Fifteen; now add the two men traveling to Emmaus and we get seventeen. We haven't reached ten million yet, but don't be in a hurry, we are coming to it. We are also told that Jesus showed Himself to over five hundred at one time. Let's say an exact five hundred; that makes five hundred seventeen. Later, on the way to Damascus, our Lord showed Himself to Paul in an eye-blinding vision. That counts up to

five hundred nineteen. And we know that Paul became a witness to many, many people who became converts and subsequently witnesses. In Acts 1:8 we read that our risen Lord, in a time span of forty days revealed His resurrection with infallible proofs. And He said to His disciples, "Ye shall be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Now if you can imagine how many people were converted through the preaching of the apostles (some three thousand at one time) and through the preaching of the following ministers of the Gospel to this day, and all of those converts becoming witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, it almost makes one's head to swim. You see, don't you, that each Christian *is* a witness of the resurrection of Christ because we are risen with Him. If He had not risen we would still be in our sins. We confess that Christ is in our hearts, that His resurrected life is in us, like the song says, "I know He lives for He lives within my heart".

Now the number of witnesses have leaped to an astronomical figure. I had suggested ten million, but the Book of Revelation speaks of the host of the redeemed to be such that no man can number. That leaves the number ten million in oblivion.

Now that it has been established that each and every Christian is a witness that we have the new, resurrected life of our risen Lord within us, what does that mean for us? It means that we, in all our life, in all our actions, in all our speaking *must* bear witness to that glorious New Life! The question which faces you, each one of my grandchildren is, "What *kind* of witness am I" and, "What kind of witness *should* I be". The answer to that last question is not hard to find. It is found in detail in the third chapter of the letter to the Colossians, which begins with, "If ye then be risen with Christ . . .(and that identifies us) there follows a list of things we must do and must not do, if we are to be good witnesses. Will you please lay this letter down for a minute and sit down and read that chapter?

* * * * *

Aften having read it can you fit into that picture the viewing of normal t.v. fare? In fact the fifth and eighth verses read as though the Apostle Paul had devoted an evening in front of that tube. All of the Ten Commands of God are violated in our watching, *and enjoying* that fare. Dare you place your words and deeds alongside this chapter? Hebrews twelve speaks of "a cloud of witnesses"; and you know that a cloud is composed of millions of droplets of vapor. Well, children, we are a part of that cloud, and you should now be ready for my final question before I sign off: "*What kind of witness were you today?*

With love, Gramp.

P.S. I want to sneak in one more question: "What kind of witness do you resolve to be tomorrow? G.

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. C. HANKO

GEMS FROM THE GOLD MINE OF THE **HOLY SCRIPTURES**

The Wicked are like the Chaff

"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."
Psalm 1:4

The righteous are like a tree.

They are like a tree laden with brilliant foliage and producing an abundance of fruit.

For the righteous are planted by God near the Stream of living waters, which is Christ Jesus. They draw their life and strength from Christ through the bond of living faith, which unites them to Him.

Their leaf never fades or dies. Their fruit never fails. All that they do prospers, for the Spirit of Christ inspires them, even compels them to use all their gifts and talents to the glory of God.

"The wicked are not so."

Scripture refuses to compare the wicked to a healthy tree that in some sense or another brings forth good fruits. When the figure of a tree is used in reference to the wicked, they are compared to a bad tree that only brings forth bad fruit. (Matthew 7:17, 18). We often hear the deeds and accomplishments of the wicked praised as if those fruits of their labors are certainly commendable, also in the sight of God. Although they are unbelievers who live solely for the things of this world, they receive their Oscars, their place in the hall of fame; and are praised for their athletic ability, their business acumen, and are admired for their riches and success. Even the church speaks with admiration of these men as pleasing to God. Far be it from the world to respect and esteem the servant of God who has devoted his whole life to the cause and kingdom of God. Far be it for them to speak highly of some lowly saint who is an example of Godliness and piety. How dangerously close we come to following the example of the world.

Often we ourselves tend to admire a certain individual for what he is, in spite of the fact that he wants absolutely nothing to do with religion, the church, or the cause of God's kingdom. We may be attracted to that person as a friend, we may even associate with him with the tacit agreement that we will be silent about our convictions and he will avoid anything that might offend us. A compromise with the world often becomes a sore temptation for the members of God's church. Sometimes a young man is attracted to a young lady of the world by her beauty, her dress, or her alluring personality. Sometimes the devil succeeds in luring a young lady to fall for the friendly advances of some nice fellow of the world. One step of compromise can create an involvement that brings years of misery.

The wicked are like the chaff.

We think of a field of grain rustling in the wind and rippling like waves of the lake. The farmer visits the field when the crop is ripe, mows down the grain, gathers it into bundles and carries it to the threshing floor, a hard, clay surface that can be used for winnowing out the wheat.

Various processes were used. Sometimes the wheat was spread out on the threshing floor to be beaten out, or to be trodden by the feet of men or of oxen. The grain was gathered in, the straw and the chaff were left to be blown about and driven away by the wind. Another method was to take up a small bundle of grain and toss it into the air repeatedly, until the grain had fallen out and the chaff was scattered by the wind.

Scripture more often speaks of chaff. Wicked nations are sometimes compared to chaff that is driven away by a stormwind or burned by fire. See Job 21:18; Isaiah 17:13; Hosea 13:3.

John the Baptist speaks of Christ as the one who will gather the wheat into His garner and will burn the chaff with fire unquenchable (everlastingly).

This does not mean that the chaff serves no purpose in the plan and counsel of God. In a field of wheat, the chaff serves the kernels of wheat. Without the chaff, the wheat could never develop and grow to maturity. The seed is sown. A small sprout appears from the soil. Then the leaves and the stalk gradually develop into a full grown plant. Finally, within the husk the kernel of wheat develops and ripens. When that kernel is ready to be harvested, the farmer gets busy to separate the kernel of wheat from the chaff. The chaff has served its purpose and is now worse than useless.

This is a clear example of election and reprobation. Just as God has eternally appointed that the entire wheat plant should serve for the ripening of the wheat kernel, so also God has eternally determined that the reprobate wicked shall serve for the salvation of the saints.

Out of the same seed and in the same soil sprouts the entire plant, including the chaff and the wheat. Both are temporarily regarded as wheat. One may look at the ripening grain and say, "What a beautiful stand of wheat". Both the chaff and the kernel receive the same rain and sunshine. Both grow up together, even though the concern of the farmer is for the wheat. The chaff grows up as chaff and the wheat as wheat.

During the history of this world the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent develop out of their common parents, Adam and Eve. God gives His good gifts to both the reprobate and the elect. They both breathe the same air, receive the same rain and sunshine, health and strength, food and clothing, and all that is necessary for them to fill their life span and to serve their purpose here on earth. These gifts, including all adversities, are blessings for God's people and a curse for the wicked. Sometimes they are mistakenly referred to as blessings also for the wicked. At times, it would even seem as if the wicked receive more of these "blessings" than the righteous. In Psalm 73, Asaph struggles with that very problem. Why should the wicked who oppose the Most High and persecute God's people receive more bounties than the righteous? He could not understand this, until he had wrestled with this problem in prayer before the face of God. Then his eyes were opened, and he saw that the blessings of God's people are a curse for the wicked. God sets them, as it were, on a steep ski-slope, on which they descend in soul thrilling speed, yet which ends in a chasm where they are completely destroyed. The same gifts of God serve to develop the chaff into full grown chaff, even while they develop the wheat into sound healthy kernels, fit for the Lord's garners. Psalm 92 teaches us that the wicked are like the grass that flourishes, but soon whithers and passes away. See the similar figure in Matthew 13:24-30.

The same thing becomes evident in the church, where also reprobation serves election. God gathers His people in the line of continued generations of believers. Both Cain and Abel, and also Seth, were of the same parents. Yet Cain was the reprobate, while Abel and Seth were elect and given grace to love and serve God. The seed of the serpent manifested itself in Cain's generations; while the seed of the woman developed out of Seth, even until Christ was born. Isaac and Rebecca had twin sons, yet before they were born God informed

them that the elder would serve the younger. The younger, Jacob, was chosen to be the wheat, while Esau was appointed to be the chaff. Already then God revealed that, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." In his generations, Esau continued to be an enemy of the church, always persecuting her and thus purifying her as by fire. Esau and Jacob met together for the last time in the persons of Herod and Jesus, for Herod was an idumean, a descendant of Esau. That was to Esau's final condemnation.

Election and reprobation became evident especially at the cross. There the chaff had ripened to a point where it was ready to shed off the wheat. The chief priests and rulers, along with carnal Israel, Pilate and Herod, revealed their hatred against God and their neighbor in openly rejecting the Christ. They showed that they cared not at all about God, not His Christ, nor His cause and people, but were filled with the carnal ambition of an antichristian world kingdom. In spite of all that Jesus had spoken - and no man ever spoke as He did - and in spite of all His mighty signs and wonders, they rejected Him as a blasphemer and a deceiver. Yet by that very act, God brought about the redemption of sins and the salvation of His church. Wicked, ungodly men carried out all that God's Hand and counsel had determined before should be done. Acts 4:10, 11, 27, 28.

Even now reprobation still serves election. God is tearing from the faces of evil men the mask of "brotherly love", human kindness, politeness, morality and decency. Man now does his "thing". He belongs to the "now" generation that wants to enjoy their treasures and pleasures right now. The ungodly want to determine what is right or wrong, good or bad, and they refuse to have anyone dictate to them what they must do. The majority decides whether abortions are right, whether sexual relationships may be carried on outside of the marriage bond, whether marriage is a holy state or a mere convenience. The chaff reveals itself more and more as chaff, for there is no fear of God before their eyes. They maintain a form of godliness, but deny the God who is the power thereof. There is no love, no real spiritual bond that holds husband and wife together. Parents "love" their children only when those children serve their selfish purposes. Children love their parents only when those parents cater to their selfish whims. There is none righteous, no, not a single one. There is none that doeth good, no not one. They are all like empty chaff, that is cast into the air and is swept away by the winds of God's righteous judgments.

For God is not mocked. The winds of judgment already sweep over the earth, tossing up the straw and stubble and carrying them away. As man fills the measure of his iniquity, both as nations and as individuals, these winds reach hurricane proportions. The world knows it. They fear the catastrophes that befall them, but can do nothing about them. All the while God declares powerfully from the heavens, saying, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations." Haggai 2:6, 7. And who shall stand when He appeareth?

The righteous are not so.

They are like a tree well planted by rivers of waters.

Their fruit is evident in that fact that they walk not in the counsel of the ungodly.

They do not stand in the way of sinners.

They do not sit in the seat of the scorners.

But their delight is in the law of the Lord. On that they meditate day and night.

Blessed are they.

Truth vs. Error

THE CHRISTIAN LISTLESSLY ESCAPING SIN

But while he lingered, the men seized him and . . . brought him forth . . . outside the city and left him there.

—Gen. 19:16, Amplified Bible

The Old Testament saints, looking forward to Christ, were by that fact and in that sense Christians. Lot, too, was a Christian. Although nowhere listed in the faith-heroes Hall of Fame, he was, nevertheless, a child of God. He is often referred to as a backslider. In a certain sense he was that. Since a backslider is one who has slidden back from a forward position, many, properly, may not be named as backsliders, simply because they never had been spiritually anywhere forward or up front. Lot had; but he drifted back. Still, the King James word "backslider" is not the most accurate term. It is not found in the New Testament, and the idea of the English word "slide" is not in the Old. In Hosea 4:16 we read, "Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer." This could

be better translated, "Israel is stubborn as a stubborn heifer." Any minister who has ever served the church in farm lands or cattle country soon learns a little of what it's like to load heifers on a truck. Pigs may raise a racket about it, but are loaded without too much difficulty. Sheep probably present the least difficulty in directing their movements. But heifers are usually stubborn. They have to be pushed.

Don't you often have to be pushed or hurried? Father, or mother, calls you to come, or to go somewhere. Your usual or frequent response is, "In a minute!" But when mother calls you to come, she does not intend that you act "in a minute." She wants you to come *immediately* You understand the meaning of that underscored word. Why not learn to be bi-lingual on the point? Learn the word in Dutch. Ask around about it.

Well, Lot had to be pushed, for he was continually holding back. He had procrastinated to such an extent that he had to be hurried along. Gen. 19:15. Yet he lingered (v. 16); he loitered until the men (angels) seized him, his wife and his daughters, brought them out, and put them outside the city. Why didn't he flee with all haste the place where his daughters' purity was not safe, where his sons-in-law were daily exposed to vile corruptions and his guests to shocking violence? Amazing that Lot had to be hurried and dragged out of Sodom! What should you learn from this? That there is no safety in or near sin, but only in fleeing it! Wasn't Lot foolish to think himself saved while he lingered in the place of destruction? May you think that *you* are a Christian while you conduct yourself in any way of sin? By nature, we are likely to wish we could be saved *in* our sins. But it doesn't work that way. We must be saved *from* our sins.

Amazing? It was incredible that Lot not only lagged along the way, but even argued with his rescuers! In water-rescue training one learns that a drowning man can be dangerous, a threat to his own and his rescuer's safety. One learns to protect oneself with skill, not brute force, in performing the rescue technique. But now, suppose the Mall were all aflame: surely you would not dilly-dally over a slot machine or argue with police and firemen for waving or even shoving you out!

But Lot prayed, "Oh, not so, my Lord!" For a long time already Lot had been praying just such a prayer. He had been praying, "Not Thy will, but mine be done." Is that what you pray? at least down in the depths of your heart? Even when it was evident that the Lord was being merciful to him (v.16), Lot still went on refusing to have anything but his own way. Remember the Babel-builders? They would stop at nothing to get themselves a name and fame, to get their own way. And Lot even went so far as to oppose, every step of the way, the Lord's rear-guard rescue action. That is like jumping up the only fire-escape with storage, then locking it and throwing the key away. But isn't that just the way we are by nature? According to the flesh, we are bondslaves to King Sin down in his dark dungeon of Death; and we just love to have it so (Jer. 5:31). We love our slimy pit; we love our heavy chains and our griping shackles; we love being locked in, want no disturbance, such as efforts

to free us. So you see once again that if we were not saved by *God's* sovereign, free and mighty will, we just never would be saved.

But Lot goes on to do worse. He speaks rather piously, yet at the same time, complainingly about the grace and mercy of God then saving his wasted life. He has the gall to complain that his rescue, right then being effected, would only imperil his life. Strange, isn't it, that prayer like Abraham's self-effacing petition is rare, while the egotistical prayer of Lot is multiplied throughout the earth! But do we not ourselves sometimes pray simultaneously, piously and complainingly? We piously bow in prayer at table thanking the Lord for our food, only the next moment to complain because there is no dessert or because we don't like broccoli.

One of Lot's rescuers earnestly urged him, "Escape for your life! . . . Escape to the mountain, lest you be swept away!" (v. 17). Yet Lot could hardly bring himself to do this. His response was, "Look! This town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please! let me escape to it—isn't it small?—to save my life!" (v. 20, New Berkeley Version). Many professed Christians will not give up Sodom. Others, realizing that one cannot be a Christian and remain in Sodom, then want to substitute Zoar for Sodom. But what is the world of Zoar against the world of Sodom, though it be but a shred of the world; it is still the *world*, the *wicked world!* It is upright to relinquish a great Sodom while holding in reserve a little Zoar?

"Is it not a little one?" Lot does not cease to amaze us. Now he *whimpers* as he drags his feet. He carries on in a quavering tone, like a stubborn child with a whining voice. He was getting to be a pest. Abraham certainly knew that God could do more for him than he could do for himself. See especially Gen. 22. But Lot had not learned this, for he went on nagging for his little Zoar. But aren't we rather like Lot? Are we willing to give up our Sodoms without begging God or at least expecting Him to leave us a little corner corn-patch under our own control? Knowing what the converted Ephesians did with their occult books of magic, Acts 19:19, will Christian young people addicted to *Rock* "music" even approach that commendable action by ridding themselves of a tithe to their collection? There goes a "Rock" devotee: he has his little batteried Zoar in his pocket and plugged into his muddled little head. Everywhere he goes he carries around with him his own incessant, clanging, crashing hell.

Lot was granted his request. v. 21. Was that an answer of mercy, merely, or was it chastisement, delivering him over to his desires, as in Psalm 106:15? Evidently the latter. Lot chose his *own* way. The *Lord's* ways are ways of pleasantness, and all *His* paths are peace. Lot's paths did not end in peace, but in tragedy and gloom. Lot was not *drawn* by the joys of heaven, but *driven* by the sorrows of earth. He was not able to say, "I have learned in whatever stae I am, therewith to be content." We have so much. We have the Heavenly Manna, the Water of Life from the Rock, the Pillar of Could sheltering us, the Pillar of Fire separating us from our foes. What more do we need? Yet we have more: we have the Cross on Mt. Calvary, our eternal refuge. Then shall we

shimper and yammer for the fish and garlic of Egypt? Shall we slink off to a little Zoar where we hope to conceal under a veneer of religiosity a giant Sodom-size worldlinesss? Lot did. But his ardor for it soon cooled and froze to uncontrollable dread. Then quickly enough he deserted that place for the refuge of the mountains. He did through fear what he could not do by faith. He finally became spiritually unhinged. He learned to his sorrow that the world's Sodoms and Zoars are all alike. In them there is no peace, safety, satisfaction or rest. The pall and dread of judgment hangs over them all. Judgment, too, lingers. Don't forget that. Yet mercy flies with the speed of a falcon. Good for us, too, that it is so, or judgment would sweep us all away.

Lot's angel rescuers understood that he was one of the elect, yet they did not omit their many exhortations to him. He was predestinated unto life, but not apart from means. The Lord ordains His own means as well as the glorious end He has for us. A mere word to the wise is sufficient to inform them of their danger and to start them on the way of blessed escape from judgment. But are we not so exasperatingly unwise? We have to be warned, urged and persuaded repeatedly. Sometimes we need to be troubled into thoughtfulness. Cp. Luke 18:5.

Learn from Lot's history that sin must be given up. Jer. 4:1. You can't do that but in the Holy Spirit's strength. But you must *do* it. To cling to sin is to cling to destruction. Flee youthful lusts! not "in a minute" — *immediately*!

AVOID EVERY FORM OF EVIL

by Everett Buiter

It is true that at the beginning of time the Devil was limited to the means by which he could present evil to our first parents. He only had a insignificant piece of fruit, and a few malicious lies which he could subtly use in order to cause Adam and Eve to fall. But with this little leverage he has acquired a vast supply of material things that are used by him today as means to the end of causing men to fall into deep sin. Over the years as man has invented many new things the Devil has used them to present evil. Evil today can appear in many shapes and forms before our eyes. All the inventions of men are good and profitable, but the Devil turns them around so that they serve him and present his perversities. The radio no longer is simply used for good music and sound words of the gospel, but it is crammed full of false advertisement, false ideas, and horrid music. So we today need to hear a strong word from the Scriptures concerning these appearances of evil.

We read this in one of Paul's epistles which are loaded with sound admonitions given in love. In his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the fifth

chapter, and the twenty-second verse, we read the following: "Abstain from all appearances of Evil." This concise admonition appears within a group of seven short admonitions which are very practical for our lives. Paul tells the saints that they must rejoice, pray without ceasing, give thanks, quench not the spirit, despise not prophesying, prove all things, and finally abstain from evil appearances. These all are given with the end result that we will be completely sanctified and that our body, soul, and spirit will be without blemish before God. These activities should take up all of our time in life if we truly sought to follow them.

Now in the first place we must see that Paul makes clear to us that evil is something which can be seen by us. Evil is not something that hides under a bushel and quietly sneaks up on us. Rather evil in this verse is something which we easily recognize. It is a thing which makes much noise. It is very perverse and ugly to our regenerated eyes. There is nothing pleasing in it. This is always the case for young people in this present day and age. If he can say that he does not see evil he must be very blind and deaf. Evil today parades itself noisily about in every marketplace. It loves the amplifiers of the musicians. It loves large groups of young persons so that it might be roudy. It thrives in the large and crowded cities of America. The nature of evil is not just to stay cooped up in the chambers of man's heart and brain. Rather if it begins as a evil motive it is not at peace until it becomes an evil action. An evil thought of hatred does not rest until it manifests itself as an evil deed of murder. Evil loves to show itself and it loves an audience.

In the second place Paul commands us to abstain from these various appearances of evil. This is a personal action of ours which must be done daily. There is not rest from this activity for us young people. We may see this activity of perversity today. We are not allowed to see as much evil as we can let alone to see how much we can do. We should strive to keep our mind, soul, and spirit in separation from evil. Now this is not isolation for that is an impossibility and because there are some good things to be had out of life for the Christian. But it is a avoiding of evil appearances such as pornography, violence, disrespect for authority, and drunkeness. We must not dash to see these things but we should flee from them.

But finally in the third place we must not think that if we simply avoid evil we will be alright. No, this is not even the case in this admonition of Paul. Implied in this admonition is something positive which is always the case for the Christian. Not only must we avoid evil, but we by all means must fly after that which is good and pleasing in God's eyes. Paul would want us to remember some of his other words which he penned in another one of his letters. In Philippians 4:8 Paul says "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." The Christian life is negative by being positive. If we love and do things which are good we will indeed avoid every appearance of evil.

A MODERN PARABLE ABOUT A FOOL

by Rev. David Engelsma

Once upon a time, there was a young man (there was a young woman also, but I am more familiar with the young man). He was the son of believers; he was baptized; he was raised in a Calvinistic church, which preached that the end of all things is the glory of God; every day, the Bible was read in his home, giving sober instruction about the brevity of this life and about a coming eternity; he knew the Heidelberg Catechism and its teaching that the redeemed are not their own, but are the property, body and soul, of the Lord Who bought them.

He was a fun-loving young fellow already in his teenage years. He found Church and catechism a bore. At first, he attended catechism, because his parents made him. But he hardly ever knew his lesson; almost always the preacher would have to lead him, stumbling, word by word, through the answers. He had no time for this. His week was filled with friends, with games, and with television. Although he attended, he was not interested in the lesson. He never learned. Sometimes, he would fool around with his buddies, disrupting the class. When rebuked for this, he would sit sullenly by, looking at the clock, as the preacher went on explaining the Trinity, the covenant, and the return of Jesus to Judgment. As he became older, his attendance fell off. At times, he skipped; at other times, he arranged his schedule so that he could not attend. Soon, he made a formal, public profession of his faith; and that was the end of catechism.

It was much the same as far as Church was concerned. When he was younger, he had to go to church regularly with his parents. But he had made up his mind that the services, and especially the sermons, were a drag. He disliked Church and made no effort to hear and understand, or to enter into the worship. It was dull! He itched to be finished with it. The fun was outside. When he became older, he would sit in the back with his friends. There, they could whisper and joke and pass the time. Before long, it became customary for him to skip the evening service altogether. Instead, there were parties, or television, or just driving around.

Much of Sunday was spent in front of the T.V. During the football season, the whole afternoon was devoted to the games.

He never read the Bible, much less any religious books or articles. He seldom prayed, and when he did, the prayer was formal and fast.

He had a good time, and there were many thing to do. He had many friends. He had a car and a snowmobile. There were parties and movies and ball-games. He dated. He liked girls, and girls liked him. This all cost money; and, so, he got a job. Even while in high school, he worked part-time, much

more than was necessary, although the schoolwork suffered.

Needless to say, he was never home. This bothered his parents, but he paid no attention. It was much more exciting, going out.

There were times, it must be admitted, when, strangely, all his fun left him cold and empty, times when he was restless, depressed, down. It was especially at those times that he drank too much and smoked pot.

He was in his early twenties when he met and fell in love with the young lady who became his wife. She was not from his church; in fact, her background was not Reformed at all. But she was pretty, and she was willing to join his church. He recalled some warnings of his parents about marrying in the church, but brushed them aside, reminding himself that the girls at church were too dead; and, besides, he knew them all like sisters.

The first years of their marriage, he worked long hours. In fact, they both worked. They had to, because they had gotten enormous debts. They had built a new house. They had furnished it with fine, new furniture. They had bought a new car. They also liked to eat out and to take a good vacation, now and then.

Often, he was much too tired on Sunday to attend church. He never went more than once. This was his only day of rest, he said. When he did go, he was critical of the preacher—much too long-winded and much too deep. He could not understand a word the preacher said. In fact, he changed churches, giving as his reason that the new preacher was more down-to-earth, although the real reason was that the consistory had angered him by reminding him that he did not attend faithfully, or pay his budget.

Then the children came. But only two. That was his decision. "Too expensive," he argued. "I can't afford them." Secretly, he also thought that they would take too much of his time and get in the way of his pleasures.

Through hard work and good luck (he boasted), he became successful, quite successful. He established his own business and made it flourish. He became rich. With his money, he made new investments, which also paid off. He lived the good life. He ate and drank well. He travelled. He was a big man in financial and civic circles. He and his wife were recognized socially.

Between his work and his play, he was hardly ever home. He saw very little of the children and took almost no part in their upbringing. He soothed his conscience, occasionally, by assuring himself that all his hours away from home were for his children's financial benefit and that, someday, the time would come that he could slow down and spend more time with the family. He never had time for the Bible or prayer.

It was on account of his work that he left the Calvinistic sphere of his upbringing. Business demanded that he move to another city. He did, although the city had neither a Reformed Church nor a Christian School for the children. The change of churches did not trouble him. "There is no difference," he would say. To tell the truth, he much preferred the new church. There was little preaching, mostly jokes and stories. No one cared that a man would miss church for month on end; and the budget was low. As for the lack of the Christian School, he had long felt that tuition in the Christian School was much

too high, and that his children could just as well be taught in the public school. Didn't he support the public school with his taxes? And shouldn't Christians be witnesses to the world?

In the new city also, he prospered. He had everything heart could desire. Life was good.

Still, there were times of depression. In fact, he was often worried—"up-tight," he said. Worried about his business; about his investments; about his help; about high taxes; as time went on, about his children—wild, rebellious, running with a bad crowd, on drugs, in trouble; even about his marriage. He would drink then, heavily. And think: Always time to get things straightened out; everything will work out fine.

* * * * *

This fool was not yet 50 when God required his soul. There was no warning. What clearer, sharper warning could there be anyway, than the warning of the Word of God that he had despised and shut his ears to from childhood?

He lost his treasure at that instant, lost it all, and lost it forever.

And in the moment before he was sent away to eternal hell, the charges were placed against him:

-Idolatry: the love, the seeking, and the service of Mammon, all the while hating and rejecting the God of heaven and earth. For "no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mommon."

-Unbelief: It was Jesus Christ and His Kingdom that the fool trampled under foot when he rejected the preaching at church, the teaching in catechism, and Holy Scripture. This was the treasure that he despised when he chose the treasures of earth—destroyed by moth and rust, imperiled by thieves, and lost at death.

-Profaning the Covenant: Having sold his birthright for a morsel of meat, he counted the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace.

These charges pressed him deeply into hell, for they were terrible charges, and he was, remember, the son of believers; baptized; raised in a church that preached the glory of God as the end of man; taught the Bible with its message of the brevity of life and an eternity to come; and familiar with the Catechism's doctrine that the redeemed are not their own, but the property, body and soul, of the Lord Who bought them.

* * * * *

This modern parable of a fool has a point: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and do it in the days of your youth.

FROM SUCH TURN AWAY

by Ben Wigger

In my own mind I must admit that I have a certain amount of respect and perhaps even some admiration for people who belong to certain cults. I could even venture to guess that, say a hundred years ago, there were very few, if any, of the members of the Christian churches who had anything but alarm and contempt for the cults. A hundred years ago the cults as we know them were still in their infancy. The big three, that is Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormonism all had their birth back in the 1800's. And in the years since then, these cults have developed and grown into major forces, both in this country and the world. Their growth in itself is not so alarming, when you consider that the false church will always experience growth and will always prosper since the lie is always more appealing than the truth of God's Word. But the fact that I find interesting is the degree of respectability that these cults have gained along with their growth in members.

These cults have simply achieved sufficient members to become socially respectable.

I am afraid that at least to a certain degree we have allowed the picture of what the cults are to become glossed over with all kinds of half truths and falsehoods so that we face the very real danger of forgetting who and what the cults actually stand for.

For one thing, it seems that there are a lot of what we call successful people in this country, be it in the area of politics, business, or sports who are members of one of these cults. These people and their success reflect favorably on the cult they have their membership in.

Beside that, the membership as a general rule seem to know what their particular beliefs and views are on Scripture and how it relates to their walk on this earth. At least outwardly they seem to know what they are talking about and they seem to have a good "knowledge" of Scripture.

And still further, the growth and development of these particular groups has been tremendous, almost unbelievable. We look at the growth they have had over the past years, and we get just a little defensive about ourselves. Why

not us? How come they increase at such a rate while we seem to grow so slowly?

These groups all pose a very serious challenge to the Christian churches of today. These cults continue to grow and develop at the expense of the rest of the Church.

However, we must not lose sight of what we as the true Church have to maintain as part of our calling. We must keep ourselves pure and unspotted as a bride adorned for her husband. And when you look at what the cults teach concerning Scripture, we soon find that there is nothing but the lie there; and that we can have no part with them.

According to the book, *The Rise of the Cults* by Walter Martin, the word cult refers to any major departure from Orthodox Christianity relative to the doctrines of the Christian faith. And if there is one characteristic which these cults do seem to have in common, it is that they deny the Biblical doctrines of the Trinity and the Diety of Christ.

One reason for the rapid growth of these groups is that they tend to "convert" to themselves people who are not sure just what they believe or why they believe it. Cults thrive on two factors when confronting a person and what he believes: that person's ignorance and that person's uncertainty. I am afraid that it is no understatement when I say that the average Christian is terribly unprepared to defend his or her faith thoroughly. He knows what he believes, but so often he does not know why. This is the very point where the cults have driven their wedge into the Church and through which countless doctrines have penetrated.

Another fact which I find interesting with regard to these groups is that they are all built on not what the Bible teaches, but rather on what the founders of the respective cults said the Bible teaches. The Jehovah's Witnesses movement started with Charles Russell, Mormonism owes it beginnings to Joseph Smith, and Christian Science began with Mary Baker Eddy. In each case, one person and their ideas were the basis for the birth of that particular cult.

Again, from all of this, it should become increasingly clear to all of us that today it is of the utmost importance that we have a clear and concise picture in our own minds on just what we do believe and why we do believe it. It is not good enough to have just a so-called "thumb-nail" sketch of what our views are. Our churches will continue to face the world and what it calls truth until the return of Christ; it will not get better, only worse.

We can not bury our heads in the sand and hope that the challenge of the false church will go away. For the Bible assures us that the growth of these groups is a sure sign of the approaching end of the ages when "deceivers shall grow worse and worse, deceived and being deceived"; "ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth"; "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away".

And that should be enough warning for us, the calling by the apostle Paul in II Timothy 3:5 to turn away from such things. We can do so only by the

guiding hand of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. By God's grace we will be able to stand in these last days. We must never take what we have, the truth of God's Word, for granted. It is such an easy thing to lose. It is only through prayer, study of God's Word, and faithful attendance of the preaching from week to week that we can expect any kind of success in our fight against these cults or against the false church of which they are a part.

Ignorance and uncertainty will only be overcome by knowledge and confidence. The Word of God has all of the answers, but we have to be willing to look for them.

THE SORROWS OF CONCEPTION:

3. The Christian Woman's Comfort

by Mrs. Harold Brands

Two Children are taking a winter walk alongside of a big man. One is the man's child while the other is a stranger who happened along and joined them for their walk. As they walk along, they come to a patch of ice on the sidewalk. Both children run gleefully forward, begin sliding, slip, fall and injure themselves. You can picture this injury to be a slight bruise or a severe fracture, this makes no difference. What is the reaction of the children? Well, the child whose father is nearby immediately runs with her injury to her father for help, knowing she belongs to him and he will help her all he can. The stranger, however, has nowhere to look in expectation of help; if she also turns to the man, it will be out of desperation because her own father is absent, not with any sense of a right to expect help.

In this series of articles we are discussing the sorrows of conception and have now come to a discussion of the response to these sorrows which a Christian woman should have. If we are going to find the Biblical Christian response, then we must begin with the basics and keep straight that a Christian response demands at the very start that it be a Christian woman who is responding. The opening illustration is told to help us keep in mind that we are speaking of such a woman only, the woman who is a Christian, who belongs

to Christ.

In our story, walking along in company with a child of the father did not turn the stranger into another child of the father. Just so, a Christian woman is not merely a church member who walks in company with God's children. We know that many who attend church are Christian in name only. But such a woman, although she attends church and although she fellowships with true Christians, is incapable of having a true, Godly response to her suffering.

Nor is a Christian woman merely a church member with head knowledge of Bible doctrine and Bible content. Bible knowledge is crucial to being a Christian but it does not make one a Christian. We have to be careful that we do not think ourselves capable of a true response just because we know a lot about the Bible. If we have no more than head knowledge, we are no more able to turn to the Father than could the story's stranger pretend to be a daughter just because she may have asked lots of questions and learned a lot about the family with whom she was walking.

Keeping in mind the opening illustration, other applications quickly become clear as well. Does being a church member who lives an apparently good life make one a Christian? No indeed, even though a good life is necessary for a Christian. What about the combination of being a church member plus abundance of Bible knowledge as well as an exemplary life? Once again, the answer is clearly no, even though in application to individual church members this may seem unclear at times. I Corinthians says that even though a person has "all faith so that he can remove mountains . . . he is nothing" if this virtue is outside the love and grace of God.

The only woman capable of a Biblical response to her suffering is the Christian woman. And the Christian woman is she who "is not (her) own but belongs unto (her) faithful Savior, Jesus Christ." The Christian woman is different INSIDE herself. She is the woman whom God has made to be His own child through the whole miracle of grace. For her, Christ was born and suffered and died and arose again. Into her heart Christ has sent His Spirit to cause her to see her sin, to weep over it and to repent of it, to turn to God in Christ for deliverance. This woman who is a Christian now studies and loves the Bible and she also seeks to live according to all she understands in the Bible . . . but she does this only *because* she is a child of God, *because* she belongs to her Savior.

Let's return to the opening illustration but change it a bit.

Suppose two children of the same father are taking a walk. The father warns them of the winter dangers and tells them to stay close by him. The one child obeys and keeps hold of his hand or at least stays close enough to grab that hand anytime it is needed. The other child refuses to listen, assumes his warnings are all nonsense and runs out of sight of the father. Here she falls and hurts herself, needing desperately her father's help. But this child, although a real child of the father, is also incapable of getting prompt help from the father, simply because she has wandered away.

This also applies to us as Christian women. We may indeed be real

daughters of God but we may not be walking as daughters close to Him, in His fellowship, "holding His hand" step by step. Then when suffering strikes us, we find it very difficult to believe His concern, to turn to Him for comfort and be assured of His love. Comfort then comes only via the difficult route of remorse and return.

But our Father is no limited, earthly father like the fathers in the stories. The earthly father has no control over his child's fall whereas our all-powerful Father controls all events so that no suffering occurs apart from His rule of love. The earthly father could get out of earshot or in other ways be unable to help whereas our heavenly Father is always there, turning our hearts to Him, working His grace through the circumstance He sends which He knows we need. How vastly comforting is this vast difference!

All of this pinpoints the basic difference between the response of the world to its suffering and the response of the Christian. The world's response originates in separation from God and His love. The Christian's response originates in the conviction of being God's child. We belong to God Who loves us as our Father and so we bend the knee and seek His answer, His explanation for our suffering.

Christian woman, do you suffer? Be very careful that your response begins here. If you attempt to explain and understand everything first, *before* you will submit, then you will not understand, you will not find comfort, you will not know the Biblical Christian response. But rather, begin by praying when circumstances and pain seem great beyond our grasp. Be careful to cling to this first, vital response: "Father in Christ, I belong to Thee. Though I fail to understand, keep me close to Thee, submitting to Thy rule. Sustain me, Father, because I belong to Thee."

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. Who gave Moses his name? Exodus 2:10
2. How old was Moses when he spoke to Pharaoh concerning the children of Israel leaving Egypt? Exodus 7:7
3. How long did the plague of darkness last in Egypt? Exodus 10:22
4. For how long did the children of Israel eat manna? Exodus 16:35
5. Who was Zipporah? Exodus 18:2
6. What did the people give Aaron to make a god out of? Exodus 32:1-4
7. Who died on Mount Nebo? Deuteronomy 34:1-5
8. Who was Moses' father-in-law? Exodus 18:1
9. Who was referred to as Moses' minister? Exodus 24:13
10. How long did Moses live? Deuteronomy 34:7

NEWS from, for and about our churches

by Marcia Hanko

BIRTHS

—Mr. & Mrs. George Bodbyl were blessed with a daughter, Monica Rose. They are members of Southwest.

—Mr. & Mrs. Dan Boone, of Southwest, were blessed with the birth of a son, David John on November 4.

—Mr. & Mrs. Duane Alsum, members of Southwest, were blessed with the birth of a daughter Amber Gayle on November 16.

—Mr. & Mrs. Hank Vonk, members of Southwest, received from the Lord a daughter, Katherine Sue, on December 30.

—Mr. & Mrs. Ron Kuiper of Southwest were blessed with a daughter, Leshia Marie on January 28.

—Mr. & Mrs. Dick Kuiper of Southwest were blessed with a son Jeffrey Scott on February 2.

—Mr. & Mrs. Art Tolsma, of Edmonton, were blessed with the birth of a son, Jason Arthur on January 9.

—Rev. & Mrs. Ron Hanko, members of Covenant, were blessed with the birth of a son, Herman John on February 18.

—Mr. & Mrs. Rich Peterson of Hope were blessed with the birth of a son Benjamin Richard on February 26.

—Mr. & Mrs. John Van Overloop, of Hudsonville, were blessed with a daughter, Jessica Leigh, on January 10.

—Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Vander Kolk, of Hudsonville, were blessed with a son, Joel Henry on January 14.

—Mr. & Mrs. Jim Van Overloop, of Faith, were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Sherry Lynn, on January 25.

—Mr. & Mrs. Randall Poortinga, of South Holland, were blessed with a son, Richard.

—Mr. & Mrs. Peter Zandstra, of South Holland, were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Pamela Joy.

—Mr. & Mrs. Paul Scholten, of Holland, were blessed with the birth of a son, Brent Alan, on February 20.

—Mr. & Mrs. Norm Vogel, of Hull, were blessed with a daughter, Kimberly Sue on January 23.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS

—Southwest received the membership papers of Randy Vanderveen from First, Ken Feenstra from Redlands and Mr. & Mrs. Peter Kamps & 3 baptized children from Hudsonville.

—Hope received the papers of Miss Linda Hoekstra from Hull.

—Faith received the membership papers of Mrs. June Griffioen from First.

ACTIVITIES

—Southwest held their annual church potluck at Hope School on February 5. Miss A. Lubbers presented a slide program on Europe following the supper.

—A Singspiration was held February 21 at First Church.

—A spaghetti supper, sponsored by the Fed. Board, was held on Thursday, March 4 at Hope School.

—The Young People in Loveland sponsored a Singspiration February 28.

—A Pancake Breakfast, sponsored by the Young People of South Holland, was held on Saturday, March 13.

—A Soup Supper, sponsored by the Young People of Hull was held February 17.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

—Mr. & Mrs. Ron Kuiper of Southwest made confession of their faith on October 11.

—Mr. Ryan Feenstra of Southwest made confession of his faith on November 15.

—Mr. Henry Ferguson of Edmonton, made confession of his faith on December 27.

—Mr. Albert Nieuwenkamp, of Edmonton made confession of his faith.

—Nancy Medema & Valerie Poortenga of South Holland made public confession of their faith on February 21.

—Brian Kroese, of Hull, made public confession of faith on February 28.

MARRIAGES

—Brian Tolsma & Carolyn Moore, of Edmonton were united in marriage on November 20.

—Henry Ferguson and Lee Ann Moore of Edmonton were united in marriage on February 13.

The Scholarship Fund Committee is offering scholarships for the 1982-1983 school year. An essay of 300 words written on the tipic, "My responsibility to Christian education or my responsibility to the Christian ministry in perilous times in the light of II Timothy 3", is required. An application must also be filled out. If you are interested in an application contact:

Mike Lotterman
1382 Su-Lew Dr. S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Applications due June 1, 1982

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