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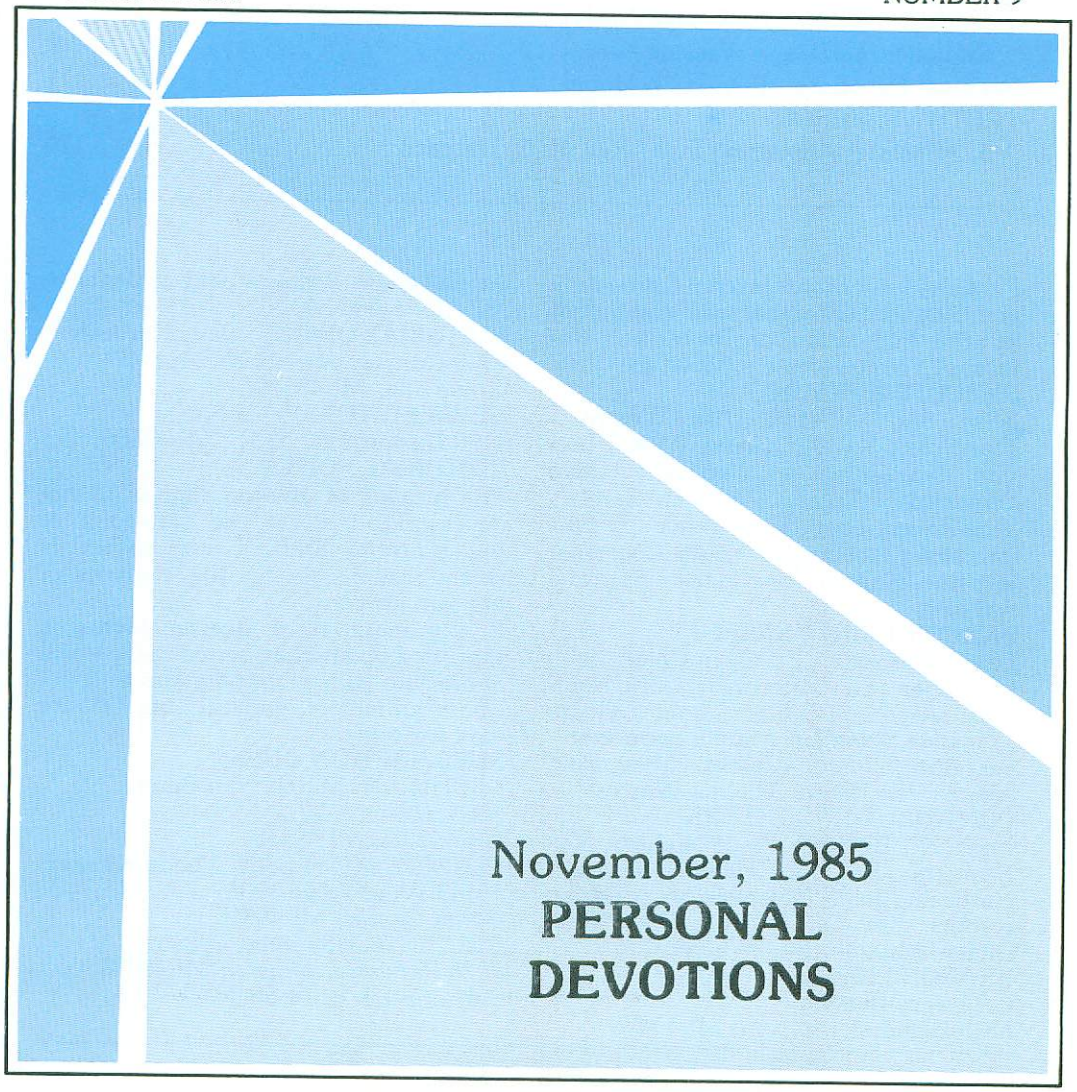

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Editorial

A Painted-picture-letter to my Grandchildren

by J. M. Faber

Have you ever painted a water color in your school? Have you ever watched a painter make an oil painting of many colors? Or a chalk artist do so with his colored crayons? Good. Then you will understand the heading of this letter. I intend to paint some pictures using words instead of oils, word-pictures.

First then, let us paint a picture of this world as it came from the Creator's Hand; The earth and all the stars of the heavens. I cannot give you a very clear picture of the earth as it surrounded the beautiful lush Garden of Eden. That part is quite obscure even under our close scrutiny. That Garden was a beautiful picture of beauties of Heaven, God made all the various parts of that garden to be most pleasant to the eyes of Adam and Eve, not only to the eyes, but to each of man's five senses. The grass, bushes and trees were all perfect. We know that for God looked at His handiwork and pronounced as "Very Good". The flowers were of such quality that we cannot now imagine. Those we know and enjoy are here today and gone tomorrow.

The members of the animal world (including fish and fowl) were also very good. They were all friends of Adam. They were so tame that they came to Adam so he could examine them, and he could name them according to their various natures. What a beautiful and pleasant place the Garden of Eden must have been!

Now we will show you another picture. This shows the earth after the curse. It is so inferior to the first as black-and-white t.v. is to technicolor. In this picture you will notice that flowers have turned to thorns and thistles. And although you may see some blue flowers on the thistles you must not pick them for they are cursed with sharp prickers. The grass is withered and seared, the soil is hard and dry. Adam had to work "in the sweat of his brow" to cultivate this hard ground to raise food for his wife and their coming children. At that time it never rained on the earth so Adam had to carry water to wet it, carrying water from the rivers. Oh, what a depressing picture this is!

If you look carefully at the details in this picture you will note there are no polar regions nor any tropical regions. Imagine no North Pole and its frozen ground; nor the Equator with its hot humid weather! That was because a vapor-envelope surrounded the globe at a height well above the firmament. That provided a greenhouse effect of even temperature over the face of the whole earth. Modern men of our time have testified to that for they have found the wooly mastodon frozen in the permafrost of that region. That leads them to state that the climate there was a habitat for such large animals.

Under those conditions mankind lived to great age (remember Methuselah's nine hundred years) and they

spread over the whole earth in a few generations. But with that long life and growing wickedness, sin also grew to large proportions. Very soon God looked down and saw that the whole world had corrupted itself. He set a time limit to mark its destruction. A limit that provided time for righteous Noah to make an ark. An ark? What was that for? We shall see in my next picture which I shall unveil for you.

Now you see water rising higher and higher upon the face of the earth. Where in the world has that water come from? There are two sources of this great flood of waters. The "windows of heaven" provided much of it. That is, the waters that were contained above the firmament in the form of vapor condensed into droplets of rain - the first rain in all creation. Those were of such volume that the only way to describe that downfall was like great windows were opened in the heavens above. The other source were "the fountains of the deep". Those were the waters that were entrapped in the original creation of the earth. They caused the Great Flood. You have seen newspaper photos of floods that swept over a portion of the earth which carried everything before it. Such was this flood. But this was no local inundation. This was world wide. It literally covered everything! It covered the highest mountains of that day.

Of course it had to be a universal flood in order to destroy all the people of the earth. All the people? No, if you will look carefully you will see a flat-bottomed rectangular boat safely floating on top of that flood of water. Not an ordinary boat like we know of. This was like a huge houseboat. This was called the Ark. It was built by Noah and his sons according to the blueprints they received from God, Himself. In that Ark (although the picture does not show them) are pairs of each specie of animal, with extra pairs of those kind to be used for sacrifices later on. Besides those animals there were four pairs of human beings: Noah, his three sons and their four wives. Only those eight souls were chosen by God to escape that total destruction that came upon the wicked population. Because the first world had become so totally corrupt God decided to drown it, and to re-create a new earth with eight righteous souls to re-populate the new world.

Now we will walk to the next easel to see what that holds. It is a picture of the new earth freshly come from the Hand of God. What a changed earth met the eyes of those eight people! Now there were high mountains, deep canyons, frozen polar regions, hot and dry deserts. Now there were deep oceans that had collected all that newly formed mass of water. Finally the animals might be released from the Ark to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth". Then Noah's family, the parents of all the people on earth today, might begin a new geneology of people. Their first act of worship, a great act of thankfulness, was to build an altar upon which they offered a few of the animals they had kept for that purpose. It was an offering of thanksgiving for so great a salvation so freely given them!

I almost hate to show you the next picture. It is so different from the last. Some of Noah's grandchildren had become wicked again. They did not want to obey God's command to "replenish the earth". For that meant that they could not all live in that territory, but must scatter to all the

continents God had made. They decided to build a city and to erect in that city a huge tower "to reach up to heaven". Probably some of the ignorant, superstitious people thought it was to climb up on to escape another flood. They did not believe God's promise never again to do that. The rulers called a town meeting (the first Union meeting?) of tradesmen to make plans for that capital city they would build, and the tower, the first skyscraper was to be centered. How soon had they forgotten that the God who had saved them was The Almighty God! They foolishly thought they could frustrate God's plan of settling the whole earth. See, the picture shows the result of God's speech to Himself. He said the people are all of one language and nothing will be restrained from them which they imagine to do. Then God said, in effect, "I will stop that new venture right now." So God worked another miracle; He confounded the way that they talked. That miracle resulted in the beginning of many languages. The members of the carpenter's union could no more understand the members of the bricklayer's union. And even the members of the other unions could not understand their own members anymore! What a confusion reigned in that city! The building stopped right then and there. Their tools scattered about where last they laid them down. And because they could not understand each other they soon disliked each other, too. They could not "get along" anymore. By those means God scattered the "one people and one language" over the face of the earth. Some migrated to Russia; some to North and South America; some to China; and still others to the Isles of the sea. I suppose that some people today wonder where all the various languages originated. We, who read the Bible, only know the true story. We see the whole picture. Look at the bottom of the frame of this picture. There is a small plate that gives its title: The Confusion of Tongues.

The next picture is a most horrible one! It show the whole earth burning up! I wish I could show you all the details of this scene. But you can imagine those that are hidden in that dense smoke. And, again it is the world of wicked men that is being destroyed. Not God's people, of course, for they shall be "lifted up" out of this conflagration (like Noah's family) and will not experience that final destruction. How will this burning occur? All we know for sure we learn from the Bible's description of it. We read, "All the elements will melt with fervent heat." That is, all the elements which make up the earth: soil and water, rock and vegatation; and all the elements which comprise the matter contained in all the stars and planets. Those heavenly bodies "shall be rolled up as a scroll."

What is the source of that "fervent heat"? I know that God has His own means, but even puny man can today make heat so fervent that it melts all that it contacts. We call it nuclear fission. Today's arsenal of weapons is so terrifying because we all can melt with fervent heat if those are once unloosed. The Apostle calls that mass of molten elements, "the earth that then was". He also wrote about the creation of new heavens and a new earth. So we learn that out of the material of molten elements (you know that once created it is never annihilated) God will create a New Earth. The

form was destroyed, but not the created substance.

In some art galleries one finds abstract paintings. I don't especially care for that type because I want to know what the artist is trying to depict. But this last easel I bring you to has such an abstract painting. God, the artist, knows exactly what it depicts. We must try to figure it out by what the Bible says about it. And the Bible does nowhere say what **it is**, only what it **is not**. So lets try to imagine a little of what it may be. In this "not is" picture we find that we will not remember the former things. We would have no time to remember former things for we shall be so awestruck with the new that it will occupy ALL our attention. There will be complete joy and companionship with one another and with our Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Our bodies will be like His glorious body and, with Him we shall see God. **That** element of this picture is unclear to our eyes as yet, but because we will be holy as God is, we will see Him in all His virtues. All of that New Earth will be a revelation of His Holiness, His Love, His Grace.

On our living room walls we may have a picture of which we shall tire some day. But this New Picture we will never tire of. Endless time will not suffice us to discover the new "finds" in our new dwelling place. Think of all the thousands of years mankind has tried to learn about all the treasures in this old world, and has not yet uncovered them all. It will take an eternity to learn all that our Heavenly Father has provided us in the New Earth. New means to praise God; new reasons to do so, and new energy to enjoy doing so.

Another dim (to me, at least) part of this last picture is about all things giving God praise. But Eve was not surprised to hear an animal (the serpent) speak in her language; so we may not be surprised to hear animal creatures praising their Maker. Surely we will not have to be told by our ministers to praise God; nor will we be trying to learn new songs of praise. We will eagerly thank God for all His goodness towards us. Every aspect of that new creation will draw forth such thanks from our hearts and lips. Today if you have friends over to your house and your mother serves you homemade fudge and cookies and milk no one has to tell you to thank her; no, you do it out of pure reaction to her generosity.

In our New Home we may sing Psalter number 413, or its equivalent, we will sing the first stanza just as it is probably, but the last stanza we may change to: Hallelujah, hallelujah, **we** magnify Jehovah's Name; **we** praise the Living God our maker, all **we** that breathe His Name proclaim".

I hope that these word-pictures we have shown you will teach you to urge yourself to praise God in all things, by all things and with all your power. Every hymnsing we attend I am reminded of that calling when the song leader tells us, "Now on that last line, give it all you have! That shout should be our reaction to God's gifts to us. Do I hear you ask, "how inclusive is that "praise business"? Please take time to read Psalter number 405. Notice: heavenly hosts, sun and moon, sky and clouds, seas, stormy winds, hail and lightning, woods and fields, creeping things and flying fowl, kings and princes, earthly judges, old and young. Capping it all "Therefore all ye saints give praise; chosen of the Lord most precious, thankful hallelujahs raise."

love, Gramps

From the Pastor's Study
PULPIT AND PEW

by Rev. C. Hanko

"For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

There is an important relationship between pulpit and pew.

The minister stands in the pulpit as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. He is a herald. The figure appears in Scripture, reminding us of the town crier, who is sent out by the king to bring the king's proclamations to his subjects. This herald must have a clear, resonant voice. But even more important than that, he must be dependable, trustworthy. It is his duty to speak on the authority of the king, presenting accurately the message of his sender. His tone of voice, the very inflection of his words must present the king's word to the people, as if the king himself were speaking.

The minister is called of Christ to be His herald, His ambassador. He proclaims God's Word to us in Christ's name, as Christ speaking to us through him. Not we determine who and what God's messenger must be. God determines that, just as God determines His message for each particular service!

We as audience must receive the Word we hear as Christ's Word addressed to us and applied by His Spirit to our hearts. Sometimes we go home and say, that was particularly meant for me! I need that Word at this time! It is often even as if the divine finger is pointed at us, saying, Thou art the man! That Word never returns void. It always serves God's purpose as a savor of life unto life or a savor of death unto death. It is the power of God, who gives the Word as a means of grace, a power unto salvation, to those who believe. That same Word works condemnation to those who do not believe. It always does God's good pleasure. We never leave the church quite the same as when we entered. For the preaching of the Word is God's Word!

It happens that, as far as we are concerned, the preaching strikes a deaf ear. Or it enters one ear and goes out of the other. It makes no lasting impression.

It may even be that we hear the spoken word and are impressed for the moment. In the epistle of James the Holy Spirit speaks of a man who is a hearer, but not a doer of the Word. He is compared to a man who sees his natural face in a mirror. He is not favorably impressed by his reflection at all. He is actually very ugly. But he is no more than turned away from the

mirror or "he forgets what manner of man he was."

Spiritually we find ourselves placed before the mirror of God's Word every time we come under the preaching. Through the Word and by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts we see our spiritual face and realize what manner of person we are. We see ourselves as God sees us. Our sins stand out in bold relief. Daily sins of desires, thoughts, words, deeds, actions. Countless sins. We transgress all God's commands! We see our depravity. Our own depravity. We had better not look at the faults of others, because we have far more ourselves! We recognize our guilt. One sin, even the smallest, if there is such a thing, deserves God's eternal condemnation in hell! We feel very strongly that this cannot go on. This must change. A radical change must take place in my life! And that at once! From now on everything will be different!

But soon we leave the church and become involved in conversations with others. Our thoughts may be diverted to some pleasantries or difficulties of life. A passing remark may be made criticizing the sermon. In any case, the devil is busy plucking away the seed that was sown. Soon we are confronted with the same temptations, and we fall back into the same ruts of sin. The Word that was preached fell like a drop of water upon a hot stove; it sputtered a bit and sizzled, and soon it disappeared! We were hearers, but not doers of the Word. Our desires, our thoughts, our prayers, our lives experienced no change for the better.

The seriousness of this experience is that sin breeds sin. We can even become accustomed to an outward, momentary repentance during the preaching, and become content with that. We can tell ourselves, I still have my cherished sin under control. I know how far I can go, and no farther! Fools that we are, trying to convince ourselves of our will power, even while sin already has dominion within us. The devil likes nothing better than to keep us convinced that we are sin's master, while actually sin is our master. Like an octopus, sin wraps its tentacles around us, crushing us to death. Still worse, sin is the tyrant that enslaved and destroys me!

There may even be a short spell of outward reform. Scripture speaks of the sorrow of the world, an Esau's sorrow, which bemoans the sad and bitter consequences of my sin. How could I ever be so foolish as to do a thing like that? How could I ever get myself into such a mess? What will this do to my reputation? What will my family, my friends and others think of me? If I could only undo what I have done! Jesus speaks of the man who cleansed his house from a devil, sweeping the whole house clean with an outward reform, only to make room for seven other devils to enter in!

The way of the transgressor is hard! It is the avenue of no return, except by a sincere, hearty repentance wrought within us by the Spirit of Christ. Sinful Israel prayed: "Convert us and we shall be converted, turn us and we shall be turned, for Thou art the Lord, our God!"

The doer of the Word sees his sin, recognizes his ugly, corrupt nature, grieves over his guilt and confesses, "I am evil, born in sin. Thou desirest truth within!" Confessing his sin he forsakes it! Only then does he experience the wonderful gift of grace, that sin no more has dominion! Grace

abounds! He is free, free from sin's dominion by the law of liberty. For the law of the Spirit of life makes us free from the law of sin and death. Rom. 8:2. "If the Son shall make thee free, thou shalt be free indeed!!" John 8:36

Critique
THE TEACHING TASK

by Ben Wigger

You know just as well as most anyone else around you that today we live in a world of rapid fire, constant social change. Never before has so much happened to so many so fast. You can not help but get the feeling that this world is headed on a mad dash to certain and absolute destruction.

Changes come so fast that it is almost impossible for even committed Christian parents, as well as their children, to know just what limits and values to enforce and to stand by.

Sad to say, but today the parents of this world are so often too absorbed with their own lives to fully support the needs of a teenage son or daughter. And this lack of support creates a very vulnerable situation for today's young person.

It is generally agreed today that the primary task of the teenage years is to construct a sense of personal identity. This identity includes various roles. First of all that of either son or daughter, student, athlete, musician, artist, mechanic, and so forth. It also includes various traits and abilities, and a personal list of what each person likes and dislikes; what his or her political and social attitudes are; what he or she believes with regard to religious and moral decisions, along with much more.

For this period of development called adolescence, teenagers need a clearly defined value system against which to test other values so as to discover their own. But when the important adults in their lives don't know their own values and are confused about just what is right and wrong, the teenagers' task becomes even more difficult, if not impossible.

What we are finding today is that teens are called upon to make decisions without having been given the necessary time to think things through. Today's teenagers are in effect premature adults, and some are not quite ready to handle all the pressure and stress that comes along with adulthood. And statistics that I found dealing with teens bears this out.

Substance abuse is now the leading cause of death among teenagers, with more than 10,000 dying from it each year. Although the use of drugs has leveled off in the past decade, alcohol use is becoming more common and is appearing among younger children.

According to a recent survey of junior high students, 65 percent of the

13 year olds had used alcohol once that year, some 35 percent used it once a month, and 20 percent used it once a week. Thirty-five percent of those asked said it was fun and all right to get drunk.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reports that conservatively 1.3 million teens between the ages of 12 and 17 have serious drinking problems.

Sexual activity, at least among teenage girls, has more than tripled over the last two decades. In the 1960's about 10 percent of teenage girls were sexually active, while more than 50 percent are sexually active today. By the age of 19, at least 70 percent of young women have had at least one sexual experience.

Besides this, five thousand teens will commit suicide this year; and for each of these suicides, 50 to 100 teens make an unsuccessful attempt.

Crime rates have increased dramatically among juveniles. For many teens, crime is just a way of life. Every month secondary schools experience 2.4 million thefts, almost 300,000 assaults, and over 100,000 robberies. More 17 to 20 year old males are arrested for virtually every kind of crime, including murder, than any other age group.

Now the question that comes immediately to my mind in all of this is just where do we stand in regard to these facts. Does our Christianity make any difference?

Heredity does not equip teenagers with proper attitudes. They will learn what they are taught. There is no substitute for parental modeling of what we wish to teach. Someone once wrote, and all of you who are parents will have to agree, that "the footsteps a child follows are most likely to be the ones the parents thought they covered up".

Our teens are watching us all very carefully, and they instinctively imitate our behavior. And they instantly discern the gap between what we say and what we do.

This is true not only of parents to teenagers, but also minister to teens and elders to teens; in fact any older person in the Church has a God given responsibility to practice what he preaches, especially to teenagers.

And just how are these principles that we believe in and confess to be the very heart and soul of our Christian life conveyed to the next generation? The answer was provided by Moses as he wrote in the book of Deuteronomy (Chapter 6:7-9):

> "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

In other words, we can not teach these attitudes during a brief two-minute bedtime prayer or during a formalized catechism class, and say that that is enough. No, we must live them from morning to night. They should be reinforced by everything we do. This teaching task is the most important assignment God has given us to do. And by His grace and helping hand our teens will grow up to be men and women of God who will in turn pass these same attitudes and truths on to their children. We owe them that.

Current Events and Comments
CATHOLICISM

by Deane Wassink

While my family and I have been serving God's people in Northern Ireland we have had the opportunity to look at world events from a different perspective. Perhaps in the future I will be able to discuss other things we have learned out here, but in this article I would like to take a look at the Church of Rome.

What is the Roman Catholic Church like in the present day and age? Is she still the one that practices the "accursed idolatry" spoken of in the Catechism, Lord's Day XXX? What about the place of the Pope? Surely Catholics would no longer say he is infallible. You see it is very easy to go soft on the Pope with the media showing him to be a gentle, fatherly, benevolent type of person who travels the globe to heal the troubles in the church. In my opinion too many of us have been taken in by the latest Romish propaganda showing their good intentions and basic harmlessness. Allow me to take you behind the scenes for some glimpses at what today's Catholic church is like after Vatican II.

Ireland is one of the strongholds of the Romish church. The things that are observable here are characteristic of that church through the whole world. Certainly, those things might be modified to fit a different society with less support.

Though Northern Ireland is mostly nominally Protestant yet there are many Catholics living here as well. Every morning I walk past my neighbors' car and see the image of St. Christopher who is the guardian of those that travel. They actually believe the image helps.

In Southern Ireland (Erie) there is a mountain called Croagh Patrick where good Catholics go to gain merit. Though I have been unable to visit the place with the Protestants who go there to witness to these people, the scene has been described to me in a terrible picture. Imagine hundreds of people climbing the rough path strewn with sharp and jagged rocks, their bare feet cut and bleeding, struggling to the top in every type of weather to gain merit with God. These are not just the young and fit that are climbing, but many old and bent for whom each step is further agony. Some never make it to the top because they are too crippled or they die in the attempt. This is not a one-time pilgrimage, the people return again and again. Remember, this is 1985! I'm not talking about the history from 400 years ago. Imagine the agony and suffering that has been and continues to be poured out on this rock in a futile attempt to gain merit with a Holy God.

Recently I purchased a newspaper while on a trip to Belfast. The paper was called "The Irish Catholic". It was dated May 16, 1985. It claimed to be the largest selling Catholic paper in

Ireland. Though I expected it to be bad, I must admit I was still shocked when I began to read. Let me share some of it with you.

NAPLES SAINT ON SCHEDULE

A crystallized substance believed to be the blood of St. Januarius liquefied on schedule this month, an event heralded as a good omen by more than 3,000 cheering Neapolitans present at the Cathedral of St. Claire.

. . .With few exceptions, the unexplained phenomenon, which the Church has never declared a miracle, has occurred three times a year for the past 600 years.

About the recent visit of the Pope to the Netherlands one reporter had this to say:

". . . he told people in Utrecht that they should obey the rules of the Church, that abortion was very sinful, that the role of women is to give birth to children and raise them, that lay workers devoting a part of their spare time to the Church should know their secondary place in the Church Hierarchy, in which the priests should continue to have the last say.

In a section entitled "THANKSGIVING NOTICES 10p PER WORD" there were many interesting notes of which this is a sample: "I AM most grateful to Edel Quinn for favours I got through her intercession. She never fails me. D.A."

In another article that dealt with the ecumenical movement the writer had this to say, "The primacy of the Pope and infallibility, followed closely by the ordination of women to the priesthood, remain the most contentious issues in efforts to achieve Anglican-Roman Catholic reconciliation."

A Fr. Jim Ryan died recently. An Article said of him:

He had a wonderful devotion to Our Lady, travelled to all the Curia Meetings of the Legion of Mary, and had just built a Shrine in honour of Our Lady, close by the entrance to the Church. . . .He loved the hymn: "Hail Queen of Heaven" . . . Now, he enjoys the company of Mary in the vision of the Most Blessed Trinity.

. . .Prayer: May the Lord accept the prayers which we offer through the intercession of Our Lady. May they help us on the way to heaven.

The words of the hymn that was mentioned are as follows:

"Hail Queen of heaven, the Ocean Star,
Guide of the wanderer here below.
Thrown on life's surge, we claim thy care;
Save us from peril and from woe.
Mother of Christ, Star of the Sea,
Pray for the wanderer, pray for me."

There is much more that could be said but space does not permit. There are some observations I would like to make that will perhaps provide a more in-depth study at a later date.

1. The Church of Rome is essentially the same as it was at the time of the Reformation though it has assumed a more "acceptable" form that deceives those that are not well-grounded in the truth.

2. We must not be fooled into thinking that the Church of Rome no longer hates the truth proclaimed in the Reformation. She still hates the cause of Christ and the Truth. It is not that long ago that our forefathers were persecuted, tortured and killed for daring to oppose the Pope. We must never forget that. Also, I am convinced that many of the troubles in Northern Ireland are caused by the evil intentions of the Church of Rome.

3. In our preaching we must not allow our people to think of the

struggle with Rome to be an old battle that is no longer relevant today. We must take pains that God's people understand that Rome is one of our most deadly present enemies.

4. We should witness to those who are of the Church of Rome in order that God's elect that are there might be brought into the True Church. May God give us true concern for the souls in the clutches of the Whore of Rome.

PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

by Rev. H. Veldman

Calling attention in this article to our personal devotions, we must, of course, first of all turn to the infallible scriptures. After all, these scriptures are a lamp before our feet and a light upon our path. And, what scripture is more appropriate for our purpose than Ps. 119? We read in verse 9: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." Notice: we must take heed to this cleansing of our way according to God's word. Then, in verse 15 we read: "I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect to Thy ways." And then we read in verse 24: "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors." We should note here that the statutes and testimonies of the Lord and of God's word are my counsellors. They teach me and I delight in them. And we would also quote II Tim. 3:16 and 17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Need we quote anymore?

Our personal devotions. This expression refers to our personal attitude toward, our personal activities with respect to the word of God. I speak to you, young people. O, this can be addressed to all our people, the aged as well as the young, officebearers as well as the laity. We all should examine ourselves in connection with our personal devotions.

These "personal devotions" can also refer to our spiritual exercises and practices in which especially our young people are engaged. This is what Beacon Lights is all about. Indeed, especially our young people. How important and vital they are! It has been said that they are the church of tomorrow. And they are. The question, then, is very important: what characterizes our young people?

Perhaps you have heard that we must allow young people to sow their wild oats. They must have their "fling." And we should not be too concerned when they engage in questionable activities. After all, we were all young once. And young people should be permitted to engage in these questionable things. However, this attitude, that we must not be too severe when our young people, because they are young people, indulge in these practices, can be very dangerous. After

all, the scriptures teach us that we reap what we sow. And this means that when we sow wild oats we will also reap wild oats.

We ask again: what today characterizes our young people? We speak of family devotions. These are spiritual activities in which the family takes part. These activities often take place at meal times, or in the evening. But, young people, do **you** engage in personal devotions? Do you read the Bible? How important this is! After all, the word of God alone is a lamp before our feet and a light upon our path. It is only in its light that we see light. Apart from the scriptures there is no light, only darkness. The word of God converts the soul, makes wise the simple. Do you take time to read this only source of all light and truth? We read other things. Do you have time and take time to read the written word of God? Do you read the scriptures, especially as young people, as the church as it shall appear in the future, that you may know these scriptures, be familiar with them and feel at home in them? Does this word of God apply to you, as we read it in I John 2:13 and 14: "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one, I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you and ye have overcome the wicked one."

Do you read the word of God prayerfully? It is only through prayer that this word of God can be the lamp before **your** feet and a light upon **your** path. It is only through prayer that the scriptures can be your guide, leading you through all the troubles and trials of this life. The world is full of temptations. Everything here below is allied against you. Temptations are all around you. Need I speak of drugs, etc? Do you resort to them? do you realize that you cannot overcome all these evils in your own strength? Peter once left his boat to walk to Christ upon the water. As long as his eyes were upon the Christ all went well. But as soon as he took his eye off the Lord he began to sink. You know the story. Do you think you can overcome the evil one in your own strength? How wrong you are! You must read the scriptures, and you must read them prayerfully. The Lord must bless His word to your life and heart and soul. You must recognize the enemy who is determined to destroy you. Indeed, you must be strong, but you can be strong only as in the Lord, through prayer and by the power of His grace. We do well to bear in mind that your enemy is strong, exceedingly clever, and that you are no match for him. And yet you must face him, oppose him, overcome him. This you can do only through the word of God and through prayer.

Do you read Beacon Lights? Yes, I may also ask you: do you read the Standard Bearer? Please do not tell me that you cannot read the Standard Bearer because it is "over your heads." I dare say that you, young people, are able to read this magazine. Do your parents encourage you to read it? This, too, is important. But, after all Beacon Lights is your magazine. It is written primarily for your sake. The articles in Beacon Lights are prepared and written that you may read them. And I have reasons to fear that in this you fall far short. It does not exactly encourage the writers of this magazine when they fear that their articles are not being read. Do the radio and the television screen draw you away from your personal devotions? Take time to

read these articles, digest them, make them part and parcel of your lives. This is your calling, as young people, particularly as young people. If you fail in this you are misusing a tremendously important part of your life. And this is sin before the face of God.

Do you engage in personal devotions as you prepare for you society meetings and for your catechetical instruction? I have my fears also along this line. I have led society meetings and catechism classes many years. What is my experience? Sad to say, there are young people, many of them, who try to get by with as little as possible. And also here our parents have a solemn duty and obligation. Do these parents know when you leave home to attend these meetings, that you are prepared? It is true, is it not, young people, that when some of you attend your society meetings, you do not even know what will be discussed. Again, do you engage in personal devotions? Do you read your subject material: Do you study it? Are you prepared to come to your meetings with questions? You are covenant people, and you are called of the Lord to prepare yourselves for your place, in the future, in the midst of God's church and covenant. God created you. The Lord placed you where you are. And it is your calling to understand this very seriously. You are young people only once. You can never retrace your steps, do what has not been done. So, do you participate in the discussion? Indeed, also as young people, make your calling and election sure. Redeem the time because the days are evil. There are so many forces and enemies who would have you waste your time. You cannot afford to do this.

Let us understand our calling. To engage in personal devotions is extremely difficult. It means that you must fight. You must fight an enemy who is all around you and also within you. You cannot fight this battle alone, in your own strength. Be strong, but only in the Lord and in the power of His might. Prepare yourselves for your place in the midst of God's church and covenant in the midst of the world. Again I say: be strong, but be strong in the Lord.

"Who can sufficiently extol these treasures of the conscience, which everywhere are spread abroad, proclaimed, and presented merely by grace? We are now conquerors of sin, of the law, of death, and of the devil; freed and delivered from all human traditions. If we would but consider the tyranny of auricular confession, one of the least things we have escaped from, we could not show ourselves sufficiently thankful to God for loosing us out of that one snare. When Popedom stood and flourished among us, then every king would willingly have given ten hundred thousand guilders, a prince one hundred thousand, a nobleman one thousand, a gentleman one hundred, a citizen or countryman twenty or ten, to have been freed from that tyranny. But now seeing such freedom is obtained for nothing, by grace, it is not much regarded, neither give we thanks to God for it."

Martin Luther

Truth Vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS

5. Apostates Appearing In It

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). **For** introduces the reason why Jude must write and his readers must earnestly contend for the faith.

CREPT IN. Some men (not many in Jude's day) did sneak in secretly by a side door into the church. They slipped past the strait gate to slither through other than the right way. (Jn. 10:1, 7, 9). Apostates are more slippery than eels in a barrel of lard. They are serpents which glided in before pastor and people were aware. Arminius was a crypto-Romanist who crept into people's hearts and affections (cp. Absalom), pretending to be a friend of truth and godliness, but all the while, gradually and surreptitiously, spreading the errors of humanism and Pelagianism. Under cover of defending the truth, he was undermining it. As the Roman Catholic church does today, Pelagius talked of nothing but "grace", but all the while he meant "works." So today, many popular sensationalistic evangelistic enterprises are really slippery skids back to Rome.

BEFORE OF OLD: that is, from eternity. (Mic. 5:2). These men were "written before of old," so that though they crept in unawares as to the church, yet not as to God. They were new in the church, but old to God, as old as His decrees. "Of old" means more than yesterday, or a long time ago as prophecied by Peter and Paul, as though whatever was in God's mind in this connection, it was subsequent to the acts of His creatures. "Of old" means as old as possible, back within the eternal decrees and purposes of God. They were "of old before ordained to this condemnation."

ORDAINED TO CONDEMNATION. This is the decree of reprobation by their sins to come to condemnation. This, more than a mere foreknowledge, is a foreordination. The most wicked deed that ever occurred, the murder of the Son of God, came not only to the notice of foreknowledge, but was foreordained in "the determinate counsel of God." Acts 2:23. It was not only definitely foreknown, but was unchangeably preordained and predetermined. Acts 4:27-28. God has so determined. There is nothing prior to God, nothing above or below Him, no outside cause of His will, to which He must respond or react. The thoughts and actions of God all begin in Himself and are determined by His sovereign will. Eph. 1:11. Jude is not saying that God determines on a foresight of man's will receiving or rejecting proferred mercy. For then man's will would be a superior cause to an act of God. No, but "**He** hath mercy on whom **He** will, and whom He will He hardeneth." Rom.

9:18. Where it is said that "God hath not appointed us to wrath" (I Thess. 5:9), others He has so appointed (I Pet. 2:8) to stumble, to disobedience (to refuse Christ), to condemnation. For this reason they are called "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." Rom. 9:22. Jesus, addressing the reprobate, said, "Ye believe not because ye are not of My sheep." Jn. 10:11. For only "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Acts 13:48. Some, the elect, were ordained to eternal life; the rest, the reprobate, were ordained to condemnation. This was before written in the Book of God's eternal decrees.

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION on this point states, "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass. . .By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death."

UNGODLY MEN so hate God and one another that they give diligence to make their reprobation evident to themselves and to everyone else. But we are exhorted to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure," that is, labor to show the evidences of election marked out in II Pet. 1:5-10. Then we shall not fear being in the number of reprobates. What is the evidence that you are ordained to eternal life? That you believe; you use the means of grace; you find in yourself the good things Peter stressed as marks of election. But the careless and profane refuse the life of good works in which God has before ordained that His elect should walk. Although sovereignly ordained to condemnation, they also themselves by their own sin decide their own comfortless case to hear the just denunciation, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. . .ye put it (the Word of God) from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:41, 46). There are downward steps to the accomplishment of the decree of reprobation: obstinacy against the loving counsel of God's Word, the constant neglect of the means of grace, persistence in a way of error, a hardening of oneself in a life of sin. These are black marks of reprobation. Beware lest you be found one of them who by sin are ordained to condemnation. "Eli's sons hearkened not to the counsel of their father because the Lord had a mind to slay them." "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence. . ."

"Ungodly ones" are, as the word signifies, "without worship." It applies to the heathen world that lives without knowledge and worship of the true God. These are wicked and ungodly outside the church who stand opposed to the house of God: I Pet. 4:18. Also the term refers to those who acknowledge the true God, having a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof by a walk contrary to their knowledge and profession. Further, the term describes our unjustified state by nature, out of which we are brought only by the death of Christ, who "died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6), that we might be "justified by His blood" (5:9) through believing "on Him that justifieth the ungodly" (4:5).

LASCIVIOUSNESS is a mark of apostasy. The apostates were and are "turning the grace of God into **lasciviousness**." The word appears 9 times in the New Testament, 6 times being translated as here, twice "wantonness" and once "filthy." Licen-

tiousness if defined as outrageous, unbridled lust, lewdness, lechery, the libidinous. We should understand the clause this way: "As to our biblical doctrine of grace, turning it to or removing it for lasciviousness." How do they do this? Two ways: (1) the legalistic apostates claim that ours is a licentious doctrine which makes men careless and profane; and (2) the antinomian apostates make grace common, extending it equally to all men alike (including apostates). The error of "common grace" deadens men to and hardens them in sin "to work all uncleanness with greediness," (Eph. 4:19), under the pretence of exalting free grace. They have only one string in their harp—love. Now they talk about a universal love to all men, so that God will not punish sin with eternal judgment, because He is too kind and loving. There is no hell because God is love. Universalists have been saying this for ages. Now this one harp-string is heard vibrating in Reformed churches. The implication is, we can live any life-style we choose, the feminist, the effeminate, the sado-masochist, whatever, and get by at last, for God is love. That's turning out or removing the grace of God for licentiousness.

THE LORD. "and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." This could be more literally translated, "denying the only benevolent Despot, God, even our Lord Jesus Christ!" Jude words it so that only one Person is spoken of, our Lord Jesus Christ, in His absolute sovereignty as "the only Despot," in His supreme deity, "God," (and so in His divine essence), also denying His headship over the church and lordship over the world, "our Lord." In Scripture He is called "the true God" (I John 5:20), "the great God" (Tit. 2:13), "the mighty God" (Isa. 9:6), "God over all" (Rom. 9:5), "God manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). Here Jude says He is our only Master, only God and only Lord. Christ deniers say, "We are lords; we will come no more unto Thee" (Jer. 2:31). They are libertines. Their happiness is to be free of God. They are not happy unless they have freedom to go on sinning.

DENYING. Heretics always did and still do this. The Ebionites denied His deity, making Him a mere human being who received great power at his baptism. The union of the two natures in the one divine Person they regarded as impossible. Thus they also denied the incarnation. Manicheism held that the Son was an emanation from the Father's substance. The Docetites denied the humanity of Christ; it was only a phantasmal appearance. The Eutychians held that there was only one nature in Christ, consisting of a mixture of humanity and deity, as in a mixture of water and wine. The Nestorians, because He had two natures, made Him two persons. They separated the two natures, as oil and water, not mixing, are separated. Apollinarianism made Christ's human nature incomplete, the Logos taking the place of His human spirit. (Cp. Belgic Confession, IX, XIX).

Apostate human nature is so fallen as to be as bad as it can get, so that the apostate church goes for anything and everything bad. Whatever is the worst, most detestable evil beyond all others, apostates in the church will go for it and plunge into it. They depart from their plighted vows, divorce, remarry and go from one mate to another. Where polluted swamp waters find in them no hogs, frogs or maggots, these

"filthy dreamers" wallow in the most miry pits. Terminal sexual diseases spring up and spread so that there is not hope of them dying out. Evil men and seducers are becoming worse and worse. Monsters of iniquity American people have become to outdo the Nazis in murdering human beings. There are whole herds of wolves in sheep's clothing. The whole world is a Sodom and Gomorrah aflame in the divine vengeance of eternal fire. (Jude 7). God help us in mercy and preserve us for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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"It is agreed by all that eternal punishments can never come upon any of those whom Christ has freed from sin, those whom He has justified. From other punishments that have something of eternal punishment in them, believers are also freed. Nothing in the nature of Divine wrath can touch them. I grant that God does afflict those whose sin He pardons, but there is a great deal of difference in respect of the hand from which the afflictions proceed, the persons who bear the afflictions, the reasons for afflicting, and the ends that God aims at in sending the afflictions."

Samuel Bolton