

Our Always Faithful God

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The editor asked me to write a short article for Beacon Lights. The only thing in that request that appealed to me at all was the word *short*. I would not want it any other way. He further explained that it would have to be in connection with the 50th anniversary of our Protestant Reformed denomination and more specifically, about the depression years. In other words, it would have to do with the history of our churches, or to express it correctly, the history of God's church. That is what we believe, do we not?

It is God who called that church into being, and according to question and answer 54 of our catechism, the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His spirit and word out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain a living member thereof. We are reminded also of Article 27 of the Confession of Faith. These are very beautiful and comforting words for the child of God indeed. And because it is God's church, its' history is so very important to all of us.

This church is in the world, but not of the world, and when God in His divine wisdom visits the world with His judgments, whether it be famines, great earthquakes, devastating tornadoes, or so-called depressions, the church too is affected by them. In fact, it is precisely for the welfare of the church that these things come to pass. The "depressions" of the 1930's was no exception. If we see it in that light, there is a very important lesson in it for us. To our young people the 1930's may seem almost like ancient history, but to us oldsters it is only a short time ago. Although our young people were born and raised during years of unprecedented prosperity, it does not mean that the Lord does not speak to them in other ways. I am sure there are a goodly number of our young people who have experienced the loss of father, mother, brother, sister, or a very dear friend. That, too, is the calling voice of our faithful covenant God. The scriptures tell us that *all* things must work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.

But what about our churches during those depression years. Work was very scarce and money was hard to come by. We all know that it takes a considerable amount of money to maintain a church and denomination. And consider for a moment that at that time, there were many of our families who through loss of their jobs, were unable even to provide for the physical needs of their families such as food and clothing. At that time, the government did make jobs available to quite an extent so that not all the unemployed would have to stand in line for food. Nevertheless, there were many of us who had to rely upon the mercies of the church through our deacons to supply our daily bread and to help us meet our obligations to the work of God's kingdom. Is history going to repeat itself? It could happen! But the Lord provided for His church during that period too, as He always does.

In connection with this, it would be interesting to know what the salaries of our ministers were during those years. I have no access to consistorial archives, and to trust my memory, I dare not. I am sure that our older ministers could paint quite a picture as to what transpired during those years along that line. But, perhaps they are too modest to do that. This much must be said, regardless of what the salary was, the beautiful truth of God's Word was proclaimed, and they labored faithfully in the Lord's vineyard. The Lord uses those times to draw His people closer to Him.

During that time, different congregations came into being and even church buildings were erected. Through the faithful preaching of the Word, the eyes of some were opened to the error of common grace and Arminianism. It was true in those years too that the Lord added to His church such as should be saved. It might not be amiss to mention here that during those depression years the first Protestant Reformed day school came into being at Redlands, upon which soon others were to follow. To be sure, it was pioneering and it was not easy. But there too the Lord provided. It was a beginning and today most of our children are privileged to receive Protestant Reformed instruction.

When one takes the time, and believe me, it is well worth it, to page through the old volumes of the Standard Bearer, what a gold mine of material one finds there. The Lord raised up men whom He equipped physically and spiritually to produce what they did, and the material we find there is just as relevant today as it was in the 1930's. Besides their regular ministerial labors, they produced volume upon volume of literature which is well worth our time and effort to pursue. On top of that, they were instructing the students in the seminary, preparing them for the ministry.

I am sure that much more could be said of what was going on in our churches during those depression years. We were small then and we are but small today. Let that not be a reason for any of us to become discouraged. It is God who has entrusted that truth of His Word unto us and therefore He is on our side. We have God's promise that no one can pluck us out of His hand. We had that promise then and we have it today.

This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning.

GREAT IS THEIR FAITHFULNESS.

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