

BEACON LIGHTS

August - September 1965

Convention News

GERRY VANDEN BERG

The Classics - Good or Bad

AGATHA LUBBERS



BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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YOUTH IN BEREAVEMENT

Ah, Lord God! Teach us Thy ways today!
Teach us Thy ways in brilliance of glad jubilation, but also
Teach us Thy ways in deepest, darkest mourning;
For we have been bereaved!

Eternal God! Teach us Thy ways today!
Teach us the glorious essence of Thyself
That we behold Thee, as *our God*, in changeless splendor unsurpassed;
For *by Thee* we are bereaved!

Ah, Gracious God! Teach us Thy ways today!
Teach us what safe retreat Thou art with drawing, undergirding, everlasting arms, and
Teach us there to know Thy peace and fix our sight on Thee
In times we mourn, bereaved!

Comforting God! Teach us Thy ways today!
Teach us to view Thee build Thy Church from age to age on Truth. and
Teach us by Thy grace to love it, serve it, and confess it well, cost what it may
E'en though we be bereaved!

Jehovah God! Teach us Thy ways today!
Teach us as youth to follow paths and creeds so well defined from Scripture's page, and
Teach us to venerate the heritage of Truth which Thou hast given Thy Church on earth
through man ordained
Of whom we are bereaved!

H. W. K.



Convention News

GERRY VANDEN BERG

25th Annual Young People's Convention . . . South Holland, Illinois . . . Tuesday through Thursday, Aug. 24-26, 1965 . . . time to meet our young people for a few days again . . . Such were the thoughts running through the heads of quite a number of our Protestant Reformed young people. Not only the young people, but judging from the fine turnout at the pre-Convention Singspiration held at Hope Church, our older members also showed their interest in the activities of their covenant youth. True, even though this was just a little bigger gathering than just young people and the Federation Board apparently didn't know too much of what was planned for the convention (except that everything would be explained on the church doors . . .), the singspiration was a good sendoff to a rather successful convention.

Conventioning in earnest began with the bus departure from First Church bright and early Tuesday morning. At least these 50 bus riders arrived in time to register during the afternoon as the host society had planned (along with a few other arrivals.) Anyhow, the rest of us who managed to arrive after the deadline for registering had to elbow our way through the crowds at the mass meeting to receive our big blue badges on which someone had erroneously printed the wrong dates. Good thing it was only the days mixed up and not something else. . . .

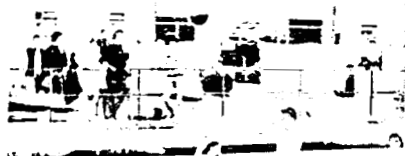
Ah, yes, the mass meeting. Few would disagree that the contents were very appropriate and beneficial. Professor Hoeksema's speech dealing with the nature and contents of the heritage that belongs to us as covenant youth along with some good special numbers from a couple of our societies certainly provided an interesting and spiritually beneficial evening for the young people and adults gathered *en masse*. But one incident, minor perhaps, will long be remembered by those who were present there. Too bad you can't just snap your fingers and get a public address system installed and in operation. That would eliminate a lot of fuss and embarrassment to all parties involved, especially when such gallant efforts

failed to achieve the desired effect. (Would you not agree, Professor?)

Refreshments and get-acquainted time and games soon passed the remaining time until we all had to leave to make sure we would get home by the twelve o'clock curfew. After all we needed a little sleep before that business meeting so bright and (yawn!) early the next morning.

But inspite of late arrivals business proceeded to go quite smoothly and before we were (most of us that is) fully awakened, business was over and we exited and met a short while later at the swimming pool. Those souls hearty enough to brave the cool air splashed around for a while and finally were forced to shelter, along with the others who came along mainly to watch, by the approach of one of Chicago's short and sweet thunder-showers. After that though, the sky cleared up and pretty good weather prevailed for the remainder of the outing.

Next stop was a forest preserve (and it seems there were so many forest preserves around. Which one is dinner at, drivers?) There finally, we waited around for a bit until Rev. Veldman opened with prayer and we fell upon the food which didn't seem to last nearly long enough. First-comers managed to get both buns for their hot-dogs *and* a bottle of Pepsi. But don't stand back too long or you'll end up eating plain weiners (either roasted or cold . . .) Then came the time for the big choices. Either you could sit down with a group and talk, or you could stand around doing a whole lot of nothing, or else maybe (as a few couples were seen doing) you could take a walk in the woods to enjoy the beauty of nature (?). Anyway the choice was left up to you; did you make good use of it? Around one things started to look better: at last there was time for some planned activity. Unfortunately the scheduled round table discussion "fell through". There is, you know, a great deal of benefit from such discussions not only for those who prepare for and participate in such a group, but for members of the audience as well. Our disappoint-





ment was soon lost however, when Rev. Schipper began his excellent speech regarding how we are to preserve that heritage entrusted to us. Thank you Reverend, for the added effort you put forth so that even those in the back rows were able to hear you. (Maybe a reward of a new pipe would be in order, no?) It was all too soon it seemed that we finished with this program and ball games were started. For some "unknown" reason the South Holland dominated team representing the West rather soon succumbed to a strong Eastern team (we especially liked that good showing by the pitcher . . .). Those who did not participate in football or the girls' softball game did a rather good job of razing the professor-type umpire and the hapless of the players, under the able leadership of Rev. Veldman, of course.

Ball games over we found ourselves with just about three whole hours for ourselves. Good time it seemed for many to go for a ride and burn up some of their extra gasoline or just to sit around for a while or to do this or that . . . or whatever else our little hearts desired. Funny, but it seemed that some still needed this time to get just a little better acquainted. . . .

By the time six rolled around finally, all of us were ready for supper. The sight and smell of all those hot dishes being carried into the church sparked still higher our growing appetites. And it sure seemed funny how long it took that line to move into the eating room (until of course, we saw those who had headed the line start to exit. *That* explained a lot.) Then came the task of squeezing the fully fed conventioners into three buses. (Someone bring along a shoehorn next year—it might help!) After the drivers decided which route was the best way through Chicago's South Side, we departed to see the wonders of the great (?) city. En route a slight fee was collected for tickets to Prudential Building Observation Deck. (Funny, but I heard there were three different rates for the three buses. . .) Our drivers dropped us off in front of good old Buckingham Fountain and our group rather promptly managed to spread itself out over a large section of Grant Park. (The drivers and buses disappeared — not to be seen again for a couple of hours.) When our dear fountain failed to light up in all its magnificence, our hosts ushered most of the wandering conventioners to-

gether and led a rather disorderly march to the lobby of Prudential (that's when we first missed the buses. . .). Up on "top-of-the-rock", it was rather warm and dark. It was sad that a mist came off the lake and hid quite a bit of Chicago's gloriously monotonous skyline. Down forty stories by elevator again, we all exited to the sidewalk and began our long vigil for those buses. Finally after many false alarms, they arrived and the weary convention folks started back to South Holland. (I'll guess it was a small — very small — percentage that made the midnight curfew that night.)

Thursday's morning sunlight fell on many sleepy conventioners at the traditional pancake breakfast. After a rather good meal of fried sausage and pancakes fortified with some good coffee, we met again at the church to finish our business. Primary items were a resolution of the Board and the task of electing the new officers. With the help of four able ballot counters (and a special thanks goes to you!) the many ballots were taken and we found ourselves with almost an entirely new Federation Board. May the Lord bless them in their work during this coming year.

But then a look at the clock told us it was lunch-time again. We had been looking forward to a discussion during the afternoon, but apparently this had to be canceled also because those who were supposed to participate were not notified. This, I feel, was one of the biggest shortcomings of this convention. Not only were there too few of these discussion groups, debates, round tables, etc. on the schedule, but those planned did not materialize. These are ways in which the covenant youth are enriched in the knowledge and experience of their covenant heritage. Perhaps that resolution from the Federation Board will help to cure this aspect. If it is properly applied, it certainly will be a step in the right direction. Maybe then we will know if stronger measures need to be taken in the future.

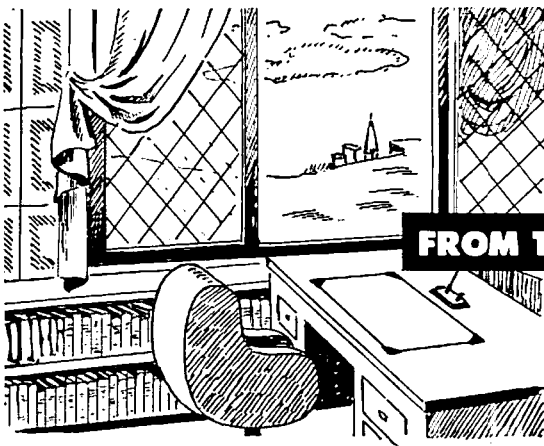
Anyhow, this left us with another whole afternoon to ourselves. Time for many, it seemed (and in a way I am rather sorry to report this, too) to take off for White Sox Park to lose themselves in a ball game for a few hours. Is this the way for covenant youth to spend their time at a *Protestant Reformed* young people's convention? ? ? ? ?

In spite of the great time lapse there were

still the few habitual latecomers for the picture that evening. Fortunately they all seemed to be on time for the food. Once past the punch-bowl we found ourselves in a large cafeteria decorated in island style. A glance at the West wall showed very plainly what the theme was meant to be -- Jamaica. Even though the covers of the menus fooled some of us for a while, there was no mistaking the aroma and taste of the food -- so appropriately labeled with island name. Following the feasting the convention theme was summarized by Rev. Van Baren in his address concerning our calling to preserve our heritage

as Protestant Reformed young people. After the end of the special numbers, we were shown a series of slides dealing with the trip of Rev. Heys and Mr. Zwak to the island of Jamaica. When the lights went back on again, our new Federation president closed with prayer and then the convention ended with the familiar strains of "God be with you. . ."

Yes, covenant youth, a glorious heritage is ours. Let us always labor with the single eye and willing heart until one day we may have the crown of eternal life. And may God be with you all until we meet again -- at next year's convention in our Southeast Church.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. LUBBERS

"PREPARING MEAT IN THE SUMMER"

"The ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their meat in the summer" Proverbs 30:25

God's great creation is as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate in invisible things of God, namely, his power and divinity.

Solomon possibly had more insight into this book of creation than any man before him, after Adam; he had more insight into this creation than all except Christ, who

brought forth things new and old from the treasury of God, pointing out that the kingdom of God happens in parables. For "all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart". II Chr. 9:23.

Solomon observed things both great and small. But in all things he saw the greatness of God. Everywhere he observed that each

creature is filled with the measure of wisdom wherewith its Creator endowed it. And he too observed that the creatures all adapted themselves to the seasons.

In this observing Solomon did a little cataloging of the creatures and of his observations concerning them.

It is wonderful to observe the works of God. Who among all the sons of men have ascended up into heaven and descended? Astronauts? They are still on the earth in "outer space". Yea, who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in his garment?

Proverbs, by the mouth of Agur, speaks of two things, three things, four things.

Yes, there are four things which are little upon the earth. They are the exceeding wise creatures. They are the ants, the conies, the locust and the lizard. Wisdom of God implanted in the very nature of the insects and the reptiles. Look at their customs, ambitions and habitat! The ants are a people. They are well-organized. The small conies have a well protected house: the rocks. And the locust go in bands, yet they have not king. And the lizard ingratiates itself into the palace of the king!

From all of these we can learn much.

Particularly from the ants we can learn by considering its ways. Writes the son of David: Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise; which having no chief, overseer or ruler, provideth her bread in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

There are thousands of different types of ants in the world. They are found every where and in every land. On the highest mountains, in the deepest valleys, in every crevice and rock you may observe the ants. They build large houses which only they can build. They have their workers, warriors, army and their drones and queen. Yea, they even have their "milk cows", insects which they capture and which suck the juice from roots, etc., so that they may utilize this "milk".

However, among all of the life and activity of the ants there is nothing quite so amazing as their ambition. They are ever preparing food. They are not like the bird who sows not, neither gathers into a barn, mere seed pickers. Nor is every ant for himself. They

are a people, a colony. They are social insects and are not as flies, but are comparable to the bees. They jealously gather and protect their bread, their harvest. They may have war, but never do they have civil war! They do not fight their own but only those on the outside.

And they are little upon the earth.

The ant is small, and, as a people, they are not strong.

Yet, they provide their meat in the summer. They do the right things at the right time.

This we are to consider, youthful reader. We may take large and lengthy vacations, long and extended trips, circle the earth in hours by jet propelled airplane, and never see the wonders of God under a decaying tree trunk in our back yard. When we look at the creatures it is good to take Solomon with us on our guided tour. He will not dissect the ant in his laboratory; he will point out the nature, the habits of the ant, the wonder-work of God!

Here is wisdom displayed.

Man must take a leaf out of God's workmanship and Solomon's note book. We too must prepare our meat in the summer. We must not squander the time with a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands. Summer is the time for preparing of the bread. Yes, in the sweat of our brow. Summer is not the time for a great vacuum in the life of God's people. It is the time for preparing for the harvest. It is the time for the Young People's Convention. May you, my youthful readers, be as busy in your convention preparing the bread for the coming season of society life, as are the ants in your immediate vicinity.

Should you be a spiritual sluggard: go to the ant!

Consider her ways!

Be wise with a heavenly wisdom wherewith God did not endow the ant which is little upon the earth. You hath he endowed with greater glory and preëminence. If God so glorifies the ant, and the ant so obeys its Maker, how ought we to be, oh, we of little faith?

Let us be a strong people.

Strong in the Lord!



FROM **Dort** TO **TODAY**

A History Of The Reformed Faith
The Protestant Reformed Churches

(21)

by REV. HERMAN HANKO

We have called attention to some aspects of the history of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, a history which resulted in the establishment of our own Protestant Reformed Churches. At the very end of that article we quoted both the decisions of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church concerning the dogma of common grace, and the testimony which that Synod attached to the three points.

Before we enter into our discussion of the doctrinal implications of these three points, there are a few loose ends which we ought to tie up.

In the first place, the testimony which was appended to the three points was intended to be sent to all the churches. The reason why Synod wanted this is obvious. The testimony spoke of the fact that "dogmas are not made but are born out of the conflict of opinions, and, therefore, it is desirable that the establishment of a certain dogma be preceded by a lengthy exchange of opinions. Participation in such a discussion must be as general as possible and must not be limited to a single group or church." Besides this, Synod also said that "a certain truth must live clearly in the consciousness of the Church in general, or in the consciousness of a particular group of churches, before the Church is able to profess such a truth in her Confession. It cannot be said, that this indispensable condition exists at the present or will exist after two or four years." Thus Synod urged "the leaders of our people, both ministers and professors, to make a further study of

the doctrine of Common Grace; that they give themselves account carefully of the problems that present themselves in connection with this matter, in sermons, lectures and publications. It is very desirable," Synod added, "that not a single individual or a small number of persons accomplish this task, but that many take part in it."

The remarkable part of this is that this testimony was never sent to the churches at that time. Nor, as far as I know, was this ever done in succeeding years. As desirable as Synod considered a further discussion of the question to be, it was never brought to the attention of the churches that this was Synod's anxious wish. Why this failure occurred I have no way of knowing. Why it was not sent is lost in the misty past.

However, one thing is certain. Thirty-five years after Synod decided this, there was still nothing like Synod wanted. A deep and strange silence about common grace hung over the churches. There were rare occasions when a small pamphlet appeared discussing the matter. There were times when one author or another made a passing reference to the three points in some article appearing in a church periodical. There was a discussion of common grace in the "Dogmatics" of the late Prof. L. Berkhof. But there never was anything approaching a "lengthy exchange of opinions . . . as general as possible" which Synod called for.

This may be, in part, because the testimony itself was never sent through the Churches. It is however, doubtful whether this is a

major contributing factor since the entire history of 1924 and the doctrinal issues involved soon became a topic for discussion in almost every Christian Reformed congregation throughout the entire land.

It is also possible that the Church itself was somewhat ashamed not only of the doctrine that was so hastily formulated into the three points of common grace, but of the wretched history which produced the three points. The result would then naturally be that those involved in the whole matter would just as soon forget about it and bury it in the archives of history.

It is also possible that there never was any general discussion or any attempt made through "conflict of opinions" to develop this doctrine because it just can't be developed. It just isn't possible — except that development take the way of increasing error.

This latter is worth a pause. I said above that for thirty-five years there was pretty much silence about the whole business. But we are now about forty years removed from 1924. The point is that within the last few years there has suddenly been a revival of interest in the three points of common grace. There are leaders today (especially on the staff of the *Reformed Journal* which is an independent Christian Reformed publication; but also in the *Torch and Trumpet* and *The Banner*) who are taking up the discussion of the three points once again. They pointedly refer to the testimony of the Synod of 1924, remind the Churches that Synod called for such a discussion, remark that this has never been done, and launch into their views on the whole matter. They use this testimony as a basis upon which to reopen the discussion and begin a serious evaluation of that decision.

But (and here is the hitch), they use the decisions of 1924 as a springboard to jump off into all kinds of other heresies which have never been maintained in the Reformed Churches, which in fact, have been explicitly condemned, and which is stirring up no end of trouble within that denomination today.

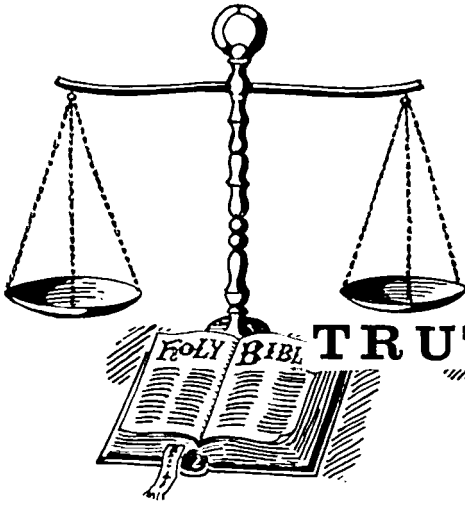
We shall have opportunity, the Lord willing, to return to this.

While we are busy tying up loose ends, we ought also to notice that the Synod which adopted the three points issued a warning. They wrote: "Now synod expressed itself on three points that were at stake in the denial

of Common Grace and thereby condemned the entire disregard for this doctrine, she feels constrained at the same time to warn our Churches and especially our leaders earnestly against all one-sided emphasis on and misuse of the doctrine of Common Grace. It cannot be denied that there exists a real danger in this respect. When Doctor Kuyper wrote his monumental work on this subject he revealed that he was not unconscious of the danger that some would be seduced by it to lose themselves in the world. And even now history shows that this danger is more than imaginary. . . ." (For the remainder of this warning, cf. our last article.)

In these words, Synod proved to be very prophetic. They, gazing ahead, with extraordinary accuracy were able to predict the consequences of their own decisions. For today a terrible spirit of worldliness has indeed seized their denomination. And, worse, a growing spirit of cooperation between the church and the world has manifested itself so that the church seems prepared, at the drop of a hat, to join hands with the world in the pursuit of worldly goals. The stand of the Christian Reformed Church on the unions is evidence enough of this.

But the Synod made one mistake. In their testimony they warned against what they called "a one-sided emphasis on and misuse of the doctrine". The spirit of worldliness against which Synod warned, was not due to a *misuse* of the doctrine; nor even a one-sided emphasis of it. Rather the doctrine of common grace was itself responsible for this worldliness that, as a matter of fact, has settled upon the church. The very evil which frightened Synod was inherent in the doctrine which they accepted. The fact that a warning, in Synod's opinion, was necessary seems to indicate that Synod sensed this. After all, the truth has no dangers in it. Its the doctrine itself which causes all the trouble, not a misuse of it. The reason is obvious. The doctrine of common grace builds a bridge across the chasm of the antithesis which separates the church from the world. It builds a bridge over which it is easy for the world to walk into the Church, and over which it is easy for the Church to walk into the world. The bridge is there. It has never been knocked down. In fact, in recent discussion it is being buttressed. The consequences are inevitable.



TRUTH vs. ERROR

by REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

7. THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

6. ITS JUSTICE

The enemies of election contend that for God to sovereignly choose a people to Himself and to deny the rest of mankind the same blessing as the elect is to become so partial as to treat the latter with the greatest inequality. They must realize, however, that the God of election is also the God of creation and providence, who in both spheres distributes His gifts very unevenly. Equality does not appear in God's distribution of physical, mental, social and material bestowments. Nor is the sovereign God bound to make an even distribution of that which is alone in His hands. Then how could it be wrong for Him to give His spiritual blessings as it pleases Him, evenly or unevenly?

Imagine conversing with a man of the world on the subject of justice. He has some regard for honesty, and may therefore exclaim, although somewhat as Pilate, What is justice? For he honestly does not know what he is talking about when he discusses the subject, and is rather tolerantly and amusedly suspicious of anyone who thinks he does know. To illustrate his point, he may ask, What is the profitable? to get well when sick? or to die? Or is it to keep healthy when well? or to become sick? Who is to say? What standard is there by which to judge? So the man is lost who does not begin with the Word

of God. For justice is that which is in harmony with the revealed will of God. Justice is the meting out of what is right. With all men the sons of fallen Adam, rebels against God, what is right for them is destruction under the wrath of God. God's justice is inexorable, and is either meted out against the sinner, or against the Divine Substitute who bears the stroke of justice they deserve.

In connection with the justice of God's predestination, He, in the matter, simply does that which is right. It is all a question of what is right. It is not a question of what God ought to do. If one of the basic presuppositions of our Calvinistic and Reformed world-and-life view is that God is God, that He is the absolute sovereign who hides His eternal counsel from the "wise" and reveals it unto "babes," then we do not speak in this connection of what God ought to do. The sovereign is not obligated to His subjects. It is not man who makes the "decision" here, but God. He decides whether there shall be a creation, whether the creature shall exist at all, whether He shall love or hate the sinner. It is His decision whether a man shall be a vessel of mercy, enjoying covenant fellowship with Him, or a vessel of wrath and so a castaway forever.

If God's justice be called into question in connection with election and reprobation, the

very foundation of the most fundamental principle of Calvinism, the absolute sovereignty of God, upon which predestination stands, is attacked. God's dominion and right of disposal is indisputable. To call God or His predestination into question is not only the height of audacity, and absurdity, but it is futile!

Today, men are charged with injustice because they choose their own friends, to the exclusion of others, because they have their favorites, because they would enjoy the seclusion of their own private property, because they would operate their own private enterprise in their own way, because they would serve a clientele of their own selection. Such a charge is really an attack on the Almighty God, for He does similarly in the heavenly sphere. He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardens. He has His favorites, the sons of Jacob. He excludes all others, the people against whom He has indignation forever. He will enjoy with His own the seclusion and security of His heaven, free of intruders. He will conduct the operations of His, the King's, business as He pleases, bestowing five talents on some, or none on others. He will not be corrupted or coerced into merging His own elect institute with the institutions of the world. He will have a true church, keep it pure and true to Scripture and the Reformation confessions, and bring it into His eternal kingdom quite separate from the society of Satan.

In this country, men are still free. But if God is to be charged with injustice because He is the God of election and reprobation, then man will soon be charged with injustice merely because he is free. For God is eternally and sovereignly free. He alone, strictly, has free will. But man is still free, in this land, to select the woman he desires to marry. Not yet does the government require a man to marry according to the will of the state. If man is so free to choose, is there injustice in God choosing whom He will to dwell with Him in His heavenly home? If a man in choosing a wife does no wrong to the other women he of necessity must reject, then certainly God is not only free to select and separate His own from all others, but also in so doing He wrongs none of the rejected element of humanity. If a man has a perverted idea of justice, he will have no conception of freedom.

When we think of the justice of God, we want to remember that the attribute of His justice is an expression of His being, of what He is. Then to remember that justice in man is a creaturely reflection of God's attribute of being. Then divine justice and human justice are not on the same equal level. As Christians, we really hold a two-level view of reality (though not a double-track philosophy)—God's level and man's. Human justice is the giving to each his due. But in divine justice, nothing is due from God, not one thing He ever gives. Man is responsible to be just. God is not responsible. He gives not account of any of His matters.

The churches of the land are increasingly having trouble with the doctrine of Predestination. Some go so far as to re-write the historical Reformed creeds, omitting this great truth. They have strong allies in those who have not yet gone this far, but who nevertheless omit the truth of double predestination from their preaching, and who mention it only to put it in the shade. So many pulpits have no more than a Ladies-Home-Journal type of "theology," a kind of Ann-Landers morality, or a Miss-America philosophy. It used to be almost universally agreed that a man acts unjustly if he allows another to break the law when it is in his power to prevent him from doing so. Now, today, almost no one thinks that way. No longer can "the average man" criticize God as unjust for being a predestinating and reprobating God. For in this day of "new morality," which means no morality, man himself is so patently without a shred of justice.

But let not the critic conclude from this that when God sees a sinner committing a crime that He, when He does not prevent it, becomes a party to it. God certainly has the power to prevent it, and to do so without infringing upon human liberty in any way. But the inherent justice of God cannot be judged according to the creaturely reflection of His justice in man. The measured cannot be judged by the measured. What is the measure of justice? Nothing less than the free will of God; nothing else than that. For that is just which God says is just, and wills is just. The just is not just because it is just, but because God wills it to be just.

Predestination makes God guilty of injustice? So the Arminian has always contended. Yet except for God's predestination and elec-

tion, all moral creatures would have died eternally. Then there would be no angels, only demons; no redeemed, only the damned. This is no theological invention, but the plain expression of infallible inspiration: "Except the Lord of hosts had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom" (Rom. 9:29). Not an earthly nor a heavenly being would be saved were it not for God's election. There would be no atonement if there were no election. Creation, perhaps, but no salvation. For man was created in moral perfection, but was made a mutable creature. He could change, fall. He could not abide in his perfection, he could not escape falling without election unto faith, holiness, salvation and every saving good.

They who will not have election and reprobation are guilty of folly. So the Lord regards them. "He put no trust in His servants, and His angels he charged with folly" (Job 4:18). The elect angels were made in perfect holiness, yet as to their creaturehood, no reliance could be placed in them, nor in their standing. The folly which God ascribes to them is their imperfection and weakness in comparison to Himself. Angels are the highest creaturely intelligences, but by nature and of necessity finite. Their original perfection was mutable and insufficient as to their innate endowments to maintain them in unchangeable holiness to eternity. For that they needed supernatural power, election grace to confirm them. Then what greater folly it is to attempt the subversion of electing grace which alone establishes in immutable perfection! There is no hope for a holy angel apart from electing grace. Much less hope is there for a totally depraved son of Adam unless sovereign mercy distinguish him!

When God is charged with injustice because He has made a sovereign election, vain man laying the charge must suppose he has some merit before God. In his day Spurgeon well refuted the charge. "Is there one man in the world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that he shall have all he merits; and his reward will be the flames of Hell forever, for *that* is the utmost that any man ever *merited* of God. God is in no debt to man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love, as much pity, and as much goodness as he deserves. Even the lost in Hell shall have all they deserve; ay, and woe worth the day for

them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deservings. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is He therefore to be accused of injustice because He gives to some infinitely more than they merit?"

The unfriendly critic will also claim that God cannot possibly make a sovereign election of some and a sovereign reprobation of others, for He is "no respecter of persons." Hear Calvin answer this charge. "The Scripture denies that God is a respecter of persons, in a different sense from that in which *they* understand it; for by the word *person* it signifies not a man, but those things in a man which, being conspicuous to the eyes, usually conciliate favor, honor and dignity, or attract hatred, contempt and disgrace. Such are riches, power, nobility, magistracy, country, elegance of form, on the one hand; and on the other hand, poverty, necessity, ignoble birth, slovenliness, contempt and the like. Thus Peter and Paul declare that God is not a respecter of persons because He makes no difference between Jew and Greek, to reject one and receive the other, merely on account of his nation (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11). So James uses the same language when he asserts that God in His judgment pays no regard to riches (2:5) . . . There will, therefore, be no contradiction in our affirming, that according to the good pleasure of His will, God chooses whom He will as His children, irrespective of all merit, while He rejects and reprobates others. Yet, for the sake of further satisfaction, the matter may be explained in the following manner. They ask how it happens, that of two persons distinguished from each other by no merit, God, in His election, leaves one and takes another. I, on the other hand, ask them, whether they suppose him that is taken to possess any thing that can *attract* the favor of God? If they confess that he has not, as indeed they must, it will follow, that God looks not at man, but derives His motive to favor him from His own goodness. God's election of one man, therefore, while He rejects another, proceeds not from any respect of man, but solely from His own mercy; which may freely display and exert itself wherever and whenever it pleases . . ." (Inst., III, XXIII, X).

(To be continued, D.V.)



CRITIQUE

by AGATHA LUBBERS

THE CLASSICS — GOOD OR BAD

Last month's Feature: "Classics — Good or Bad" will be concluded this month under the above rubric.

The Case for Classics in the School

I should state at the outset that my argument will assume that the Christian School — The Protestant Reformed Christian School — cannot avoid using the classics in its instruction of the youth. This is the world in which he lives. He is in the world. He certainly is not of it but he must certainly know the world in which he lives, he must know the culture of the world and he must be able to analyze and evaluate these products of the world.

I should further argue that even though we do not teach the classics nor hold for truth all that the classics are trying to say, we nevertheless use the classics to teach. The position of the Pr. Reformed Chr. School is not one of neutrality and our use of the classics does not negate our distinctive position. This has always been the way in which God has worked. He has always given the best products of natural man to the child of God for his use. We are the salt of the earth. The earth is here for the Christian. This includes the classics properly understood. Language, along with all the other sciences, is a gift of God. It is through language and particularly in the early Greek and Hebrew that the revelation of God came to men.

It was through the means of early classicists that the Scriptures were preserved for us.

The position of the Protestant Reformed Churches has never been anabaptistic. We are not pietistic. We are Calvinists. This does not mean that we assume for truth every thing that we read nor does our assumption that the classics are a proper means for study and analysis imply such a position. We have a calling to analyze and carefully criticize those classics which we read and study. Our approach is not that of the legalist who takes a touch not, taste not, handle not attitude but we use all things placing all things in the service of God. In a certain sense our spiritual sensitivity can be tuned up and honed down by means of the classical literature which we read.

One of the questions with which I was confronted was: "Must we read everything? Must our children read immorality?" was the appended explanation. In order to answer the previous question we must first define immorality. We should answer unequivocally then that immorality is ethical spiritual departure from the law of God. A writer composes literature which is immoral when it communicates to the reader that which is contrary to His Word and holds for truth that which is contrary to His Word and testimony. To me the question is not must our children read immoral literature but may they and can they. (There is no age when one can read pornography and not be repulsed if he is spiritually sensi-

tive.) Children can read that which is immoral (notice our definition) according to their level of maturity and not be affected adversely by such immorality. There is a certain age, however, at which they are neither spiritually sensitive nor discerning enough to detect the error taught by some "good" literature. It is the responsibility of the discerning teacher and the parent to point out the error and show it for what it is in this portrayal of life. If the child is able to read critically literature which teaches that which is contrary to the Word of God, and is therefore immoral according to our definition, then he may read such literature.

Children do not learn in a vacuum. The knowledge of the thesis in this world of sin is never discovered. God reveals truth but in a certain sense the child matures and develops thetically as he comes into contact with that which is contrary to the word of God and his testimony. In this sense we live antithetically over against the world. Our study of the classics must also develop this attitude and that at the intellectual level of our lives.

I emphasize again that the school does not teach the classics nor do we teach anything that is contrary to the word of God. This would be contrary to the basic principles that underlie Protestant Reformed education. All education must accord with the teaching of the word of God as this word is interpreted in the Three Forms of Unity. This is consistent with the confession of the Christian. As a Christian it is imperative that education be given consistent with this pattern.

It is correct to say therefore, that we never simply teach a subject as an appreciation type subject. This is particularly not true in the area of literature. The term appreciation-type subject is a mis-nomer in the sense that literature is in the curriculum of the Christian school in order that boys and girls may learn to appreciate different forms of literature. Now it is true that the form of the literary work to a great extent influences the effectiveness of the communication of ideas and to that extent we learn to appreciate and emulate good form but we do not simply appreciate and treasure every thing that has been produced because it is acclaimed by the majority to be

worthy of such honor. We have a responsibility as discerning Christians to be critical of that which we read and to examine all things in the light of the Word of God.

This examination and criticism takes place according to the measure of the gift of analysis and spiritual discernment that is in us. We cannot expect the child to read so critically and discerningly as the one who has long studied the deceitful forms in which error (immorality) is often couched. Do not think that nice literature is true because it is nice. "The closer we come to those branches and departments of modern culture in which man's ethical nature finds expression, the more it becomes evident that modern culture is corrupt." H. Hoeksema, *The Christian and Culture*. But this may not always be so evident and a studied attempt must be made to guide our children in their reading. Let them read, have them read, encourage them to read, but guide them in their reading.

So-Called Christian Literature Exposed

Much of the pietistic and so-called religious literature of our day which is found in so many church libraries is neither literature nor is it Christian. I am reminded at this moment of one such preposterous "novel" which came from the Moody Press. It is entitled *Past Finding Out*. There's not a swear word in the book but it is so pervaded with a veneer of religiosity that it is neither Christian nor is it literature, and there are many such books.

Literature must portray life. It need not be pornographic in order to portray life, but it must be honest. "The Christian school has the obligation to provide Christian literature written on a suitably artistic level. Much of the so-called Christian literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and so-called Christian literature of this present day is nothing but pietistic drivel. In these books grammar and sentence structure are poor, plots are so improbable as to be absurd, goody-goody characters react to temptation in a thoroughly unrealistic way—whole books reek of improbability. Yet because they revere religion outwardly and are published by Christian publishing houses, these books are included in Christian school libraries even though they violate every standard of good literature." (from *High School*

English Curriculum Guide, N.U.C.S.)

I am convinced that the materials referred to in the above quotation are in a very real sense more dangerous for our children to read than the so-called immoral books to which we object because they have more than two swear words or characteristic slang included in them. The pietistic, Arminian gush published by most publishing houses should be held by us in utter contempt and scorn.

Immaturity often hinders the young reader in being truly critical and selective in his reading. Let us not stymie him completely and make him a victim of a poor class of literature, which is neither literature nor Christian as we attempt to keep him from reading so-called "classical" literature. Let's expose him to some of the best in the field and develop in him discernment that is necessary for him as a Christian in the midst of the world.

IN MEMORIAM

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies and the Beacon Lights staff express our sincere Christian sympathy to the H. Hoeksema family in the loss of their father our beloved

REVEREND HERMAN HOEKSEMA

May God give us grace to remain true to the truth which He mightily proclaimed through this man.

HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE

by REV. G. LUBBERS

Book of GENESIS

3. *But God is faithful to His covenant.* Notice the Name Jehovah in verses 7 and 10.
 - a. Judah confesses his sin. Finds forgiveness and returns to the home of his father.
 - b. Tamar is brought into the covenant line; the covenant family is preserved.
 - c. From Perez king David is born. Ruth 4:18. 1 Chron. 2:5. Christ, the Holy One, is born from the unholy by the wonder of God's grace. Matthew 1:3.

Questions: What is the importance of this chapter in the Scriptures?
What is the importance of the Name Jehovah here?

- Chapter 39. The lone warrior is made strong by the arm of the Almighty. Genesis 49:24.
1. *Joseph meets a new enemy in the person of Potiphar's wife.*
 - a. Potiphar, the chief of the royal guard, buys Joseph, finds that he is attractive in appearance, ambitious and capable, so that he places Joseph as administrator over the affairs of his large estate, including land, cattle, servants, etc.
 - b. God causes Potiphar to place so much confidence in Joseph that Joseph receives complete charge over all of Potiphar's house.
 - c. But Potiphar's wife is an adulterous woman who is determined to ensnare this slave into sin.

2. *But Joseph recognizes her as an enemy and is prepared to resist.*

- a. How different Joseph's attitude toward temptation than that of Judah. He avoids temptations instead of inviting them.
- b. His arm remains strong in the God of Jacob. He gives three reasons why he may not give in to the wicked entreaties of Potiphar's wife. What are they? Verses 8, 9.

3. *Once more Joseph's righteousness is charged against him. (Sec 40:15)*

- a. He is accused of the very sin that Potiphar's wife is guilty of — a common practice among sinners. She scorns him because of his religion and speaks disparagingly of him as a Jew, or Hebrew. (Gen. 11:16, descendant of Heber.)
- b. The punishment is moderate considering the crime of which he as a slave was accused. But he is nevertheless put in chains, for the Lord is trying Joseph. Psalm 105: 18, 19.
- c. Some time elapsed while Joseph lay in prison. Grievous as was his trial as stranger in a strange land, the Lord proved that He was with him. In this dark hour God gave relief by causing the keeper of the prison to put him in a position of trust. Jehovah made him to prosper. Why?

Questions: What is the purpose of the fiery trials of the believer?

How must we explain the prosperity of the wicked over against the afflictions of the people of God? Psalm 73.

How was Joseph blessed during this trial? Matthew 5:11, Rom. 8:28, Heb. 12:2.

Chapter 40. The lone warrior experiences anew that God is with him.

1. *God brings two prominent men, the chief of the butlers and the chief of the king's bakers into prison with Joseph. Joseph is placed in charge over them.*

- a. We read only that they offended the king. There is no evidence that one of them sought the king's life. The exact offence is not important.
- b. What is important is the providence of God in this event.

2. *The Lord speaks to them through dreams.*

- a. Especially in this period of history that we are studying God frequently uses dreams as the channel of divine revelation. For whose sake? The officers of the king or Joseph?
- b. God causes these dreams to trouble the butler and the baker, so that they cannot help but consider them more than ordinary dreams.
- c. Also Joseph must have concluded that these dreams were from the Lord and that the Lord would use him to interpret them. Who else would be able to interpret dreams that were from the Lord?
- d. These dreams were in perfect harmony with the duties that each carried out before the king.

3. *The Lord shows Joseph the interpretation of the dreams.*

- a. He is confident that the interpretation will be verified in three days. He asks the butler to remember him when the butler is restored to his position before Pharaoh. He wants Pharaoh to deliver him from prison.
- b. Joseph explains that he was stolen from Canaan. The guilty parties are not mentioned. He also pleads his innocence in Potiphar's house, again without mentioning who is responsible for his imprisonment.
- c. On the king's birthday amnesty is bestowed upon the butler, even as God had revealed in the dream. But the butler shows very little appreciation, probably too happy about his own release to become involved in a case of some stranger.
- d. Joseph is called to possess his soul in patience for another two years.

Questions: Which other forms of revelation do we meet in Scripture?

Why does God give dreams to wicked men?

What is the importance of the history of this chapter for Joseph?

Chapter 41. The lone warrior sees the dawning of his day of victory.

1. *Joseph is called to Pharaoh's court.*

- a. The occasion: Pharaoh's dream. He saw seven fat cows ascend from the Nile and graze on the Nile grass. He also saw seven ugly, thin cows ascend,

devour the fat cows, and remain fleshless in their appearance. Thereupon he saw seven full and fine ears of corn on a stalk, followed by seven thin, weather beaten, hardened ears, which devoured the full ears.

- b. The king cannot banish these dreams from his mind. Why not? Who causes that? He calls men versed in deciphering hieroglyphics and cultivated in the art of astrology, as well as wise men, but to no avail. They can think of no interpretation that can satisfy the king. Who prevents them from trying?
- c. Thereupon the butler thinks about Joseph, who is called from prison, made meticulously clean and attired in proper raiment to appear before the king. What an experience for an imprisoned slave!

Joseph interprets the king's dream.

- a. Pharaoh says rather confidently, "For thee to hear a dream is to interpret it." Pharaoh must learn that there is a God in heaven Who has all power — sends dreams, shows the future, carries out His counsel. Joseph replies that interpretations are quite apart from him. But GOD will answer to put Pharaoh's mind at ease. Once more Joseph is confident that the dreams have been sent for his sake and that God will give him the interpretation, as servant of the true God.
 - b. The dreams are one. The key to the problem lies in the number seven. Fat cows and lean cows, full ears and thin ears all fall into place. Even the fact that the dream was repeated has its significance.
 - c. Joseph becomes bold in his God, Who has all power in heaven and on earth.
3. *Joseph offers a four point program.*
 - a. A man must be found to administer the affairs of Egypt.
 - b. Officers must be appointed to carry out the administrator's orders.
 - c. During the seven years of plenty a fifth of the crop must be taken in taxes. This would be no great burden because of the great prosperity.
 - d. The goods gathered must be stored in cities and kept for the famine to come.

4. *The dream and the interpretation make a great impression upon Pharaoh.*

- a. He follows Joseph's advice. He even decides that no one of Joseph's equal can be found to carry out such an enormous task. Acts 7:10.
 - b. To Joseph's amazement he is made prime minister or secretary of state in Egypt. His faith in God compels him to accept.
 - (1) He is given a royal seal to seal all official documents in the king's name.
 - (2) He is provided with new clothing of the finest linen in harmony with his office.
 - (3) He receives a gold chain about his neck as a symbol of authority.
 - (4) A royal chariot is placed at his disposal and respect for his position is demanded.
 - (5) He is given an Egyptian wife of high birth, most likely to avoid prejudice against him and to invite respect among the Egyptians.
5. *In this position he remains faithful to his God.*
 - a. He is given an Egyptian name, Zaphnath-paaneh, which may mean "sustainer of life." He is now become of age. We are informed that he is now thirty years of age. Luke 3:23. This is thirteen years after his departure from Canaan.
 - b. Gradually he begins to realize that God had a great purpose in bringing him into Egypt. His dreams may still be in his mind, if so he looks forward to meeting his family again.

(to be continued)

EDITORIAL EXPLANATION

Dear Readers:

September Beacon Lights is late for two reasons. First, the P.R. Y.P. Convention was late, hence the Feature article was late.

Secondly, several articles, including the editorial, were just plain late!

I, personally, am sorry that this explanation has to be made, for a periodical of Beacon Lights quality should never be late.

The Editor.